

Defragmenting Franciscanism:

Collaboration in a Post *Ite vos* Era



Edited by Edward Foley OFM Cap.

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Chicago: Paul Bechtold Library Publications
Catholic Theological Union
2019

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Published 2019 by
Paul Bechtold Library Publications
Catholic Theological Union
5401 S. Cornell Ave.
Chicago, IL 60615

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Cover designed by Holly Silcox

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Foley, Edward, editor.

Title: Defragmenting Franciscanism : collaboration in a post *Ite vos* era / edited by Edward Foley OFM Cap.

Description: Chicago, IL : Paul Bechtold Library Publications, Catholic Theological Union, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: ISBN **9780963665997** (print) | ISBN **9780578574110** (ebook)

Subjects: Franciscans—Congresses. | Conventuals—Congresses. | Capuchins—Congresses. | Monasticism and religious orders—Congresses. | Bulls, Papal. | Brothers (Religious)—Congresses. | Friars—Congresses. | Cooperation—Religious aspects—Catholic Church. | Conference papers and proceedings.

Classification: LCC BX3602.3 .D44 2019

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Introduction

Since its founding in 1968, Catholic Theological Union [CTU] has been a gathering point for Franciscans. The Sacred Heart Province of the OFMs was one of three original religious communities that founded CTU, and over the decades other Franciscan provinces, communities, and individuals have become part of the CTU family. Still other Franciscan groups have found the confines of CTU to be a welcoming place for their meetings, worship, and various gatherings.

This volume is a recent and significant sampling of Franciscan contributions, originally presented at Catholic Theological Union. The first part of this work contains presentations that were central to a gathering of OFM, OFM Capuchin, and OFM Conventual friars at Catholic Theological Union in the fall of 2017. As explained more fully in the introduction to that segment of the volume, this gathering to commemorate the five hundred anniversary of the papal Bull *Ite vos* came about through the initiative of three provincial ministers from these First Order communities. The ensuing day of prayer, study, discussion, and fraternity was part of a larger global movement toward collaboration across the Franciscan-Clarean family.

In 1997 the St. John the Baptist Province of OFM's established the Duns Scotus Chair in Spirituality. Part two of this volume includes papers presented at a symposium sponsored by that Chair that took place at CTU in the fall of 2018. As noted in the introduction to that part of the volume, this symposium was also an invitation to Franciscan collaboration, specifically around the topic of formation of Franciscan men in service of God's mission.

The papers of these two events have been edited and gathered into a joint volume to both symbolize the current movement of "Defragmenting Franciscanism," and to celebrate CTU as one key place where such defragmenting is taking place.

This publication could not have occurred without the support of the administration of CTU, whom we gratefully acknowledge here. We are also thankful to the three men who organized the gathering in the fall of

2017: John Celichowski OFM Cap., Mike Kolodziej OFM Conv., and Joseph Rozansky OFM. We are particularly blessed by the three presenters from that day who gave permission for their work to be included here: Regis Armstrong OFM Cap., Dominic Monti OFM, and Jude Winkler OFM Conv. We are similarly grateful for the four presenters at the 2018 symposium for also allowing their work to appear: John Corriveau OFM Cap., Margaret Guider OSF, Dan Horan OFM, and Michael Perry OFM.

Melody Layton McMahon, Professor Emerita of Theological Research and Bibliography at CTU, has been indispensable in turning papers into a publication and making this resource accessible to our readership. Her multiple skills and graciousness have rendered this a smooth and pleasant process. Thanks are also due to her collaborator and our layout editor Jaime Briceno. We are very appreciative of Jerry Bleem OFM who selected the art for our cover and acquired permission for its usage. The Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate were very accommodating in allowing us to employ this beautiful piece by Sr. Kay Francis Berger (d. 2017). Finally, we are thankful to Edward Hagman OFM Cap. for his careful and speedy proofreading of the work.

The fragmentation of the Franciscan-Clarean charism occurred with some rapidity in its historical unfolding, and defragmentation will come neither quickly nor easily. We hope, however, that the efforts documented in these pages and this collection itself might contribute, in its own modest way, to ongoing collaboration and the forging of sister-brotherhood among those who continue to embrace the Franciscan-Clarean vision at the service of the Church to the world.

Edward Foley OFM Cap.
Duns Scotus Professor of Spirituality
Catholic Theological Union
The Feast of St. Clare

Abbreviations

- 1C *The Life of Saint Francis*, Thomas of Celano, in FA:ED I:171-308.
- 2C *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Thomas of Celano, in FA:ED II:233-393.
- Adm *The Admonitions*, Francis of Assisi, in FA:ED I:128-137.
- DV Vatican II, *Dei verbum*, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” 1965.
- EG Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, “The Joy of the Gospel,” 2013.
- ER The Earlier Rule (1209/10-1221), in FA:ED I:63-86.
- FA:ED *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. Volume I: *The Saint*; Volume II: *The Founder*; Volume III: *The Prophet*. Eds. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellman, William J. Short. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999-2001.
- FI Franciscans International
- GS Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” 1965.
- LFl Little Flowers of Saint Francis, in FA:ED III:566-658.
- LtOrd Letter to the Entire Order, Francis of Assisi, in FA:ED I:116-121.
- LG *Lumen gentium*, Vatican II, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” 1964.
- LMj The Major Legend, Bonaventure, in FA:ED II:525-649.
- LR The Later Rule (1223), in FA:ED I:99-106.
- 1LtF 1st Letter to the Faithful, Francis of Assisi, in FA:ED I:41-44.

2Ltf 2nd Letter to the Faithful, Francis of Assisi, in FA:ED I:45-51.

OFS *Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*, or the Secular Franciscan Order

PerCar Vatican II, *Perfectae caritatis*, “Decree on the Up-To-Date Renewal of Religious Life,” 1965.

Test The Testament (1226), in FA:ED I:124-127.

VD Benedict XVI, *Verbum domini*, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,” 2010.

Documents from the Second Vatican Council are taken from *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations: A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*. Ed. Austin Flannery. Northport, New York—Dublin: Costello Publishing and Dominican Publications, 1995.

Scriptural translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

Other Universal Documents of the Roman Catholic Church are taken from the English translations found on the Vatican website, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>.

Part I

Introduction: “Beyond *Ite vos*” (4 November 2017)

In 2013 Pope Francis (b. 1936) spoke to the ministers general of the OFM, the OFM Capuchin, and the OFM Conventual and invited them to “stay united—walk together and grow in common vocation and mission.” The generals were moved by the words of the Pope, and they encouraged friars around the world to take up this challenge. A task force was created that provided resources and encouragement for a series of events.

In the United States, the provincial ministers of these three Franciscan branches decided that, in 2017, the Orders would commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the bull *Ite vos* of Pope Leo X, which in 1517 divided the Franciscan Order in two: Conventuals and Observants (the Capuchins were founded roughly a decade later). The ministers chose Chicago as the site of the celebration, and each branch named a representative to form a planning committee and shepherd the process forward.

The *Beyond Ite vos* event took place at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago on November 4, 2017. It was a day of study, discussion, and fraternity. Over one hundred friars gathered to hear three of their brothers

speak on different aspects of the theme: Dominic Monti OFM addressed the historical context of *Ite vos*; Regis Armstrong OFM Cap. reflected on our common Franciscan values; and Jude Winkler OFM Conv. shared what we are already doing together around the world. After lunch those present divided into groups and discussed how we might continue to collaborate so that we can “grow in our common vocation and ministry.” The sharing was lively and many ideas were raised on future possibilities. Evaluations of the event were extremely positive and those present were energized by the experience.

The Papal Bull “Ite vos”

Aiming to settle long-standing disputes among Franciscan friars, this “bull of union” issued by Pope Leo X was proclaimed in St. Peter’s Basilica on May 30, 1517, to the vast assembly of friars gathered for the Most General (*generalissimum*) Chapter of Pentecost, 1517.¹ Its provisions effectively divided the Order into two independent congregations, the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance and the Friars Minor Conventual; they would soon be joined by a third, the Friars Minor Capuchin.

LEO, BISHOP

Servant of the Servants of God

For a perpetual memorial of the matter

Preamble

Parable of the Vineyard Workers and its Application to the Friars Minor

*Go into my vineyard,*² says that Master of the household who had planted a vineyard: [that is,] the Savior of the world and our Redeemer, Jesus

¹ This translation is a revision by Dominic Monti of one provided by the inter-obediential commission “Franciscan Friars in Chapter,” to mark the five hundredth anniversary of *Ite vos*, available online in “Enlighten the Darkness of My Heart, *Ite vos*: An Inhabited Memory for Walking Together Towards the Future” (2006). See https://www.ofmcap.org/images/docs/ite_vos/ite_vos_en.pdf. That translation is based on the critical edition of J. Meseguer Fernández, “La bula ‘Ite vos’ (29 de mayo 1517) y la reforma cisneriana,” *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 18 (1958): 257-361. The final text of the bull, as well as a preliminary draft, is on pages 332-353. The accompanying notes by Dominic Monti are based on that study as well as the more detailed work of Pacifico Sella, *Leone X a la definitiva divisione dell’Ordine dei Minori*, (OMin.): *La Bolla ‘Ite vos’ (29 maggio 1517)* (Grottaferrata: Frati Editori de Quarrachi, 2001).

² Mt 20:4, from the parable of the vineyard workers.

Christ. Even though he took care of everyone and managed everything that he did, nevertheless, among his other seedlings, which, through his Father he planted in the ground of the Church militant, there was one that he looked after with such ardent love, that everywhere he would call it his own.³ He cared for this vineyard so carefully with diligent, industrious and faithful farm workers, whom he *sent out* almost constantly, some *early in the morning*, others in *the third hour*, the *sixth hour*, the *ninth hour* and even the *eleventh hour*.⁴

This is the sacred religion of the Friars Minor, who, while yet in the green leaves of fruitfulness, by means of apostolic men extended themselves like branches *from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*.⁵ They irrigated the mountains and filled the earth with the wine of wisdom and knowledge. This is the holy and immaculate religion in which we may contemplate the presence of the Redeemer as through a spotless mirror. Through it, one can admire the form of life of Christ and the apostles. It sets before the eyes of the Christian people the standards of the first foundations of the Church; and finally, it evokes what is divine, angelic, most perfect, and in full conformity to Christ—so much so that it can justly be called his own.

To cultivate this vineyard, the Master of the Household sent, *early in the morning*,⁶ *from the rising of the sun, an Angel ascending from the east, with the sign of the living God*,⁷ the blessed Francis (d. 1226), who, along with companions of admirable sanctity, laid the first foundations of this vineyard. *In the third hour*, they were succeeded by religious men, led by blessed Bonaventure; with the power and help of the Holy Trinity, they repaired the walls of this vineyard already threatening to fall into ruin.⁸ After them, as *in the sixth hour*, some friars went forth who were fervent in spirit, who, comforted by the Holy Council of Vienne, as though sent

³ This statement of an especially close relationship of Christ to the Franciscan Order, continued in the following paragraph, is reminiscent of the similar assertion by Nicholas III in his classic constitution of 1279, *Exiit qui seminat*, 1-2 (FA:ED III:739-764).

⁴ Mt 20:1-6.

⁵ Ps 72:8.

⁶ Mt 20:1.

⁷ Rev 7:2. Bonaventure applies this passage to St. Francis in his LMj, prol. (FA:ED II:527).

⁸ Reference to Bonaventure's work stabilizing the constitutions of the Order at the Chapter of Narbonne (1260).

by God,⁹ brought back to their beginnings the rigors of discipline, then almost completely worn out. Then, *at the ninth hour*—as when the Lord died—a time when evil and scandalous vineyard workers had arisen, the Lord stirred up the spirit of a youth, or rather a few friars, who under the guidance and authority of the blessed Bernardine, the herald of the Name of Jesus, and trusting in the support of the Council of Constance, revived the Order, which had languished, indeed, was almost dead.¹⁰

Then lately, in these last days, almost to the last hour, other men have appeared, zealots for the House of Israel. They cut down the sacred groves, demolished the temples,¹¹ *and where sin abounded*, with the Lord’s help, they made sure that *his grace abounded all the more*,¹² introducing a model of reform.¹³

Dissension within the Order: the Pope Urged to Reach a Solution

However, just as among the workers of the vineyard in the Gospel parable, when the ones who came later were treated as being equivalent to the ones who arrived earlier, a great clamor arose, as kings, princes, communities and peoples attest. News has reached us that serious contentions, quarrels and clashes are occurring among the friars of this religion, over [alleged] superiority and higher degrees of perfection, incidents that have been increasing day by day throughout the world.

For this reason, we, who have been ardently devoted to the friars of this Order and the Order as a whole since childhood, are now even more ardently impelled, out of the ordinary concern of the duties of our office and pastoral governance—which we bear, even though unworthy—to silence this kind of quarrelling among the vineyard workers. Imitating that steward in the Gospel, we desire to quell this grumbling, especially considering the abundant fruits that we see flow continuously to the whole church from the friars’ exemplary life and sublime doctrine. We are also roused to take action by the continual supplications and prayers

⁹ Reference to those friars who attempted to live according to the norms of the reform constitution *Exivi de paradiso*, promulgated by Clement V at the Council of Vienne in 1312 (FA:ED III:767-783).

¹⁰ Referring to the work of the reforms attempted by Martin V following the Council of Constance at the general chapters of 1421 and 1430 and the spread of the Regular Observance.

¹¹ Cf. 2 Kgs 18:4.

¹² Rom 5:20.

¹³ Reference to several abortive attempts at reform of the entire Order advanced in the early 1500s.

we have received, up to this very moment, from Christian princes, especially from our beloved sons in Christ, the Emperor-elect Maximilian;¹⁴ and the illustrious kings, Francis, the most Christian (king) of France;¹⁵ the Catholic Charles of Spain;¹⁶ Henry VIII of England;¹⁷ Manuel of Portugal and the Algarves;¹⁸ Louis of Hungary and Bohemia;¹⁹ Sigismund of Poland;²⁰ Christian of Denmark,²¹ as well as a number of other princes, dukes, counts, peoples and communities. All of them beg us to settle these divisions in the Order of Saint Francis.

Therefore, after designating a secret consistory, we have charged and enjoined some of our venerable brothers, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, to investigate diligently the causes and origins of these quarrels and divisions, and to explore thoroughly appropriate remedies in order to settle such disputes.²² After long examination and mature debate, they made a very faithful and diligent report to us. After our further consideration, having weighed the issues they explored and examined, in order to achieve harmony, and after having deliberated over them within our consistory, we, together with them and the other Cardinals, and with their unanimous opinion, have reached the following verdict:

¹⁴ Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor from 1493-1519, called “elect” because he never traveled to Rome to be crowned officially by the Pope.

¹⁵ Francis I, King of France 1515-1547.

¹⁶ Charles I, King of Spain 1516-1556, later Holy Roman Emperor as Charles V. Leo X mentioned on May 27, 1517, that he had received letters from the kings of France and Spain in favor of the Observants; see Meseguer Fernández, “La bula ‘Ite vos,’” 338.

¹⁷ Henry VIII, King of England 1509-1547, who had earlier written in favor of the Observants in 1514; see Meseguer Fernández, “La bula ‘Ite vos,’” 336.

¹⁸ Manuel I “The Fortunate,” King of Portugal 1495-1521.

¹⁹ Louis II, King of Hungary and Bohemia 1516-1526.

²⁰ Sigismund I (Jagiellon), King of Poland 1506-1548.

²¹ Christian II, King of Denmark and Norway 1513-1523,

²² The four cardinals on this commission were Lorenzo Pucci, personal secretary to the Pope; Bernardino de Carvajal, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia; Domenico Grimani, Cardinal Bishop of Albano, Cardinal Protector of the Order; and Pietro Accolti. They were assisted by four Franciscan “assessors” or consultants, who participated in drawing up the draft document: John Glapion, a Flemish Observant and close confidant of future Emperor Charles V; Boniface of Ceva, advocate of the “reformed under the ministers”; Alfonso Lozano, procurator general of the Cismontane Observants; and Juan de Costa, procurator general of the Ultramontane Observants. None of these friars belonged to the “unreformed” Conventual party. See footnote 27 below.

II. The Minister General

First, we found that the main causes of such quarrels and divisions are the multiplicity of superiors,²³ the perpetuity of some positions, and the unreformed life of other friars. Therefore we desire and we order, according to what is contained in the Rule of blessed Francis, that there should be one Minister General of the whole Order with full powers over all individual friars of the same Order. Each and every friar is bound strictly to obey him in all those matters that do not go against God, their soul, or the Rule.²⁴

This Minister General shall exercise the office of generalship for a term of six years. During this time, if it should appear to all of the provincial ministers and custodians that the aforesaid Minister General is unable to perform his service for the common good, these aforesaid friars, who are responsible for the election of the Minister General, are required to elect another, in the name of the Lord.²⁵ Having completed this term of six years, he is automatically (*ipso facto*) released from the office of generalship, and all are to consider the office as vacant.²⁶

The election of his successor is to be carried out exclusively by the Reformed²⁷ provincial ministers and custodians, whether they be Ultramontane or Cismontane, during the General Chapter of the same Order, on the feast of Pentecost, in the place chosen by the Minister General during the General Chapter immediately preceding. All the ministers and custodians or their delegates, both Cismontane and Ultramontane, are bound to attend the Chapter.

Moreover, so that the head does not appear different from the members [of the body], we desire and also command, that no friar shall be

²³ Referring to the splintering of authority within the Order with the rise of so many virtually autonomous reform groups over the preceding century.

²⁴ LR 8.1, 10.3.

²⁵ LR 8.4.

²⁶ To completely “clear the deck,” on May 29 Leo X nominated the existing Minister General, Bernardino of Chieri, titular Bishop of Athens.

²⁷ The Pope explains the term ‘Reformed’ (*reformati*) in Section V below. This general term had come into use in the early 1500s to refer, not only to the Regular Observants, but other groups in the Order attempting to follow the Rule of St. Francis more closely under reform statutes. The Pope’s decision here to exclude the “unreformed” friars from the election of the general minister, as well as his decision in Section IV below, was the “bombshell” that fell on the Conventual party on May 30.

elected Minister General if he is not leading a reformed life, and is not considered such by the Reformed Community. In addition, no one shall have [active] voice in the election of the Minister General, unless he is reformed and is considered reformed by the Reformed Congregation. If something to the contrary is attempted in the future, it shall be deemed wholly null and void.

The election of the future Minister General should be celebrated at the next feast of Pentecost in the Friary of Aracoeli in Rome, according to our orders expressed in the letters sent in the form of a papal Brief:²⁸ we order that all Reformed ministers and custodians,²⁹ as well as the vicars and discreets of the friars of the Observance, or of “the Family,”³⁰ should celebrate the aforesaid election.

And so that the election of the Minister General be carried out according to the above rule by the provincial ministers and the custodians, so that it might be celebrated freely, according to the intention of the same rule, and without any scruples [about who are valid electors], we hereby ordain and establish that these [vicars of the Observance] are true ministers, and are such by virtue of their election [by the Observant friars]; we declare also that their discreets are custodians.

With regard to other Reformed friars, we desire, in provinces where the ministers are presently not reformed, or are not considered to be such, and under whom there are some Reformed friaries, that two friars be elected by the aforesaid Reformed friaries, according to the standard of

²⁸ *Romanum pontificem* (11 July 1516), BL, AM, MSS 16, 27-28, which had summoned a “most general (*generalissimum*) chapter” to meet in Rome the following year. It was to include not only the provincial ministers and representative custodians, but also the vicars of all of the reform groups in the Order. This chapter had been summoned to meet on Pentecost (May 31), two days after the final version of the bull was promulgated.

²⁹ A relatively small number of provincial ministers and custodians who had accepted reform statutes.

³⁰ This term refers to the largest of the reform groups, the friars of “the Regular Observance,” who had been organized under Eugene IV in the Papal bull, *Ut sacra* (11 January 1446). This bull grouped the Observant friars into two large “families,” Cismontane and Ultramontane. The Cismontane family comprised Observant friars in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Balkans, and the Holy Land; the Ultramontane family comprised Observant friars in France, the Iberian peninsula, Germany and the Low Countries, the British Isles, and Scandinavia. Observant friars in each province elected their own vicar provincial who directed their life and activities largely autonomously from the provincial minister; these vicar provincials gathered in two “family” general chapters, one Cismontane, the other Ultramontane, which chose a Vicar General for their region. Each family also drew up its own general constitutions. This bull made the Regular Observance a virtually autonomous “order within the Order.”

our other letters, written in the form of a Brief,³¹ to represent the voice of those unreformed ministers of the respective provinces.

We also grant at this time to the friars of the Congregation of Brother Amadeo,³² of the Clareni,³³ and of the Holy Gospel or of the Capuche,³⁴ in each province in which they have friaries, that in addition to the voices of their vicars, they shall have, just this once, two voices.

We define and declare this election of the Minister General, which shall be carried out by the aforesaid friars, to be canonical according to the Rule of the Friars Minor and the form transmitted by blessed Francis in the Rule.

And in order to keep peace in this same Order as much as possible according to God, and to foster charity between the Cismontane and Ultramontane friars, we command that if the Minister General, as has been said, were to be elected from among the Cismontane friars for a six-year term, that in the six years that follow he should be elected from among the Ultramontane friars. The friars shall preserve this manner of alternating elections in perpetuity.

III. The Commissary General

Nevertheless, since we see that this Order has expanded so marvelously throughout Christendom, we wish that the benefit of pastoral care might never be lacking. We therefore judge that when the Minister General is elected from among the Cismontane Friars, he shall institute a Commissary General in the Ultramontane zones, to be elected by the Ultramontane friars themselves. The Minister General shall give him the task of presiding over the Ultramontane friars, in accordance with what the General Chapter deems most appropriate: but in such a way that the said

³¹ Again, in the brief *Romanum pontificem* (see footnote 28 above).

³² A reform congregation, founded in the late 1450s by a Portuguese nobleman, Amadeo Menez de Silva (d. 1482). By the late 1400s they had about thirty houses.

³³ Followers of the Spiritual leader Angelo Clareno, who had rebelled against church authority in the early 1400s; later in the century they returned to obedience with the Church, living under the authority of local bishops; they were received back into communion with the rest of the Order in 1473 but allowed to elect their own vicar general.

³⁴ This group of hermitages was established in Spain by Juan de Puebla and recognized in 1489. After Juan's death, a disciple, Juan de Guadalupe, wished to lead a life of the “strictest observance,” and gained exemption for his group in 1496. They were variously called “Discalced,” “Friars of the Holy Gospel,” or “Friars of the Capuche.”

Commissary is still subject to the Minister General, as are the [other] superiors of the Order, obliged to obey in everything according to the Rule. If, however, the Minister General were to be elected from among the Ultramontane Friars, then he must institute a Cismontane Commissary General, in the same way as stated and set out above for the Ultramontane Commissary.

The said Commissary General will exercise his office for three years only, after which, the Minister General must institute a new Commissary, to be elected as above, according to what seems fitting to the Ultramontane and Cismontane friars.

[At times,] the Minister General may be absent from the headquarters he has chosen for his six years [of service], and move to another area of his choosing. But during the time of his absence, he shall leave a Commissary in his place, with the advice and consent of the definitors of the General Chapter.

And should there be no Commissary General in the previously mentioned areas over the said six years, the Minister General shall be required, in the first three of those six years, to celebrate a General Chapter, gathering the delegates in that area, the area that he is from; and similarly he must celebrate another General Chapter in the area that he is not from, either in person or through his Commissary, to which all the delegates of that area shall attend; or else, regarding this matter, do whatever the Minister General and the General Chapter shall appropriately decide.

IV. The Provincial Ministers

In addition, with regard to the provincial ministers in those provinces whose ministers are not yet reformed, or are not considered to be such, we declare, decide and order that the vicars of the friars of the Observance, or “the Family,” of those same provinces, are, henceforth and forever, the undoubted ministers of those same provinces. Henceforth, they are to enjoy the title of minister. We make each and every friar fully subject to them, and also, as said above, the houses and places where they dwell, of those respective provinces. Moreover, to the Minister General and other provincial ministers, we grant the same authority and power previously enjoyed by the General and provincial vicars of the

[Observant] Family; and declare that this shall be considered such in perpetuity. Therefore, we command the previously mentioned friars, even those who observe the Rule of St. Francis purely and simply, to be obedient in all things according to the Rule, to the said ministers, as [their] true ministers, declared and established by us.³⁵

In addition, to ensure that the collapse of the Order does not happen again, due to the irremovability of provincial ministers, we want and we order that the aforesaid provincial ministers cannot continue in their office beyond a three-year term, after which all friars shall consider them released from office. However, during that three-year period, they may be relieved of their office by their respective chapters, which shall be celebrated according to the Rule and custom, in case they were found to be less than suitable; the same is true for the custodians, on this matter.

No one can be elected provincial or custodian or have voice in their elections, if he does not lead a reformed life, and is considered such by the Reformed community of that Province, of which he would be put in charge. Whatever might be attempted contrary to this shall, *ipso facto*, be considered null and void.

V. Who Are Understood by the Term “Reformed”

Also, since frequent mention is made earlier [in this decree] and in what follows of Reformed [friars] and those who observe the Rule of blessed Francis purely and simply, we wish and declare that under the name of “Reformed,” and those who “observe the Rule of St. Francis purely and simply,” are to be included all together and singly those included below, namely: the Observants “of the Family”³⁶ and the “Reformed under the ministers,”³⁷ including the friars of the Amadeans, of the Colettans, of the Clareni, of the Holy Gospel or of the Capuche, or again those called Discalced,³⁸ or of similar groups, no matter what name they go by, but

³⁵ This was to prohibit groups of reform friars from claiming exemption from the authority of the provincial minister.

³⁶ See note 30 above.

³⁷ These *reformati sub ministris* referred to friaries which were not part of the Regular Observance but lived according to reform statutes while remaining under the authority of the provincial ministers. The largest group of these were friars associated with the reform efforts of St. Colette of Corbie who had gained recognition to live according to their own reformed statutes. They also included similar smaller reform efforts in France and Germany, as well as the other reform groups specifically named below who enjoyed their own vicars.

³⁸ See notes 32-34 above.

who observe that very Rule of Saint Francis in a pure and simple way. Making of them one single body, we unite them to one another forever. From now on, therefore, having abandoned all these different names, they can and must be called the *Friars Minor of St. Francis of the Regular Observance*, together or separately,³⁹ and they can and should refer to themselves in this way. All of these groups together, as already mentioned, should be subject in all respects, according to the Rule, to the aforesaid Minister General, and the provincial ministers and custodians in whose provinces they are residing.

VI. The Conventuals

The Conventuals then, who live according to privileges, should be subject to and obey the same Ministers General and Provincial, in the ways that will be established when our forthcoming letters are published.⁴⁰

VII. Ban on Name-Calling

1. So that every occasion of dissension, scandal, and partiality is completely removed from the Order, we firmly order and command, under penalty of *latae sententiae* excommunication—which will be incurred *ipso facto*, and from which no one can be absolved, other than *in articulo mortis*, except by us or by the Apostolic See—that no friar of the Order of St. Francis may, with malice, ridicule or insult, call another friar of the same Order: ‘Privileged,’ ‘Colettine,’ ‘of Clareno,’ ‘of the Gospel or of the Capuche,’ ‘Pharisaic,’ or any other name, even one that is newly-coined. Nor should anyone who, in the future, using the previous divisions of the Order or using our union and institution created by the grace of the Holy Spirit, jeer, insult, or offend him in any way or be perceived

³⁹ That is, they could be called either “Friars Minor” or “Friars of St. Francis (i.e., Franciscans) of the Regular Observance.”

⁴⁰ Leo X would issue these regulations some days later in the bull, *Omnipotens Deus* (12 June 1517), which effectively organized the Conventual friars as a separate Order. This brief sentence dramatically cut back on the extensive prescriptions proposed in the draft version of *Ite vos*, which would have placed the “unreformed” friars in each province under a commissary subject to the (Observant) provincial minister, with the intent of introducing reform among them. Friars who resisted would have been condemned to gradual extinction by forbidding “unreformed” friaries to admit new vocations. In the final days before the promulgation of the bull, the Pope retreated from these provisions in the draft, to leave the two groups of friars essentially independent of each other. He was urged to do so by a communication from the Doge of the Venetian Republic as well as by many cardinals; however, this decision aggravated the monarchs of Spain and Portugal, who would eventually achieve the suppression of the Conventuals in their lands in 1566/67.

as doing so. No friar then, whether cleric or lay, should mockingly or maliciously call those friars and their supporters by such names; but all the friars of this same Order must be called, among themselves and by others, *Friars Minor*, as has already been said, or of *St. Francis*.

2. We furthermore decree that no Reformed friar can be sent by any superior of the Order, not even the Minister General, to live in an unreformed friary, or one not considered reformed. If, however, a Provincial Chapter should deem it a lesser evil to send some friar to an unreformed friary rather than keep him with the Reformed, in that case, the superiors may send one or more friars to an unreformed friary.

3. We command, under pain of *latae sententiae* excommunication, to each and every Conventual living according to privileges, both superiors and friars, that they shall not dare to receive the aforementioned Reformed except as indicated; similarly (we ordain), under the same penalty, that the Reformed friars shall in no way depart from the obedience of their ministers.

4. And so that no new groups [*sectae*] are introduced in that Order, with the risk of causing new conflicts, we firmly impose and command that in the future, no new group [*secta*] or reform shall be introduced in the said Order; or carried out without the express consent of the Minister General, or the Reformed Provincials in their respective provinces: so that such reforms should still be subject in everything to the Minister General and the Reformed Provincials, according to the Rule, as we expressed above regarding the Reformed.⁴¹

5. Therefore, we submit, and we incorporate in perpetuity, in their respective Provinces, all of the houses, places and hermitages, maintained and owned by the friars of the Observance, or the Family, or those otherwise called Reformed, subject to ministers instituted and declared by us. We want these same places held, possessed and governed in perpetuity by these same Ministers and their reformed successors. We take this upon ourself and extinguish any dispute on these matters, brought before any ordinary or delegated judge, or even before the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, or the Cardinal Protector, or the auditors of our

⁴¹ This provision accounts for the harsh reaction of major superiors within the Regular Observance to new reform movements, such as the Capuchins, in the 1520s and 30s.

Sacred Palace, or the Commissaries Apostolic, both in the Roman Curia and outside of it, both among the prelates and among the subjects, in any state or instance, both possessory and petitionary or even in dispossession, under any pretense, even if previously they were subjected to the obedience of the chapters of the Conventual friars of the said Order; and we impose perpetual silence upon the parties.

6. We also overturn and cancel judgments and processes on that matter, promoted by any judge, whatever the result, even if such disputes were to involve the places of the friars, and goods received from any area, or for any other reason. Nevertheless, we command, order, and impose on these Conventual friars, or any judge and anyone else who does not presume to make an attempt, to procure, judge or say, both in court and out, anything against this our declaration, what we have instituted, innovated, united and incorporated, under penalty of *latae sententiae* excommunication, and the deprivation of the benefits obtained, as well as the inability to obtain others in the future, even if there could, or should, be a demand on our part in the future, even if those arguments were related to the places of the friars and assets being received, or any other subject.

VIII. New Constitutions

In order to ensure, according to the needs of places and peoples, that everything is wisely regulated in view of maintaining the reform, which, through the grace of God, has been introduced throughout all of Christendom in the same Order, we desire, order, and establish, in view of the “Most (*generalissimum*) General Chapter” to be celebrated in the near future,⁴² that you deputize some friars from among those most reliable, scholars and experts from different regions. They should gather together everything they consider appropriate for the maintenance of the reform and true observance of the Rule, and the due execution of this our Constitution, to be approved by the entire Chapter or its majority, and finally by us, armed with the backing of Apostolic confirmation.

IX. Final Clauses

To the current Auditor of the Apostolic Camera, to all archbishops, bishops and prelates and to any person registered in Apostolic dignity, we command through Apostolic writings, through solemn publication of

⁴² That is, immediately following this decree.

these our letters, and everything contained therein, that wherever and whenever they deem appropriate, and whenever the Minister General and the Reformed provincial ministers or any among them so requests; that they be assisted with the garrison of an effective defense, and ensure that everyone can peacefully make use of it and enjoy it, not allowing them to be unduly harassed by anyone, or by any authority they might possess. Those who are disobedient shall be suppressed by means of ecclesiastical censures and other means of redress including, if necessary, appealing to the secular arm.

This is notwithstanding any Apostolic letter and pardons, as well as those of the Sacred Council of Constance, we specifically waive, notwithstanding any opposition to the above formalities and unusual clauses that are granted, or are eventually granted, in the future to the friars, families, congregations, denominations, or to some of them, both authors and founders, Reformed or Conventual, or those otherwise called such, belonging to this religion, even if they should have to make special, specific, detailed, and literal mention of it.

Finally, since it would be difficult to convey these letters of ours to all the places that one should, we want and we decree with Apostolic authority, that the copies, sealed by notary public and bearing the seal of an ecclesiastical prelate, are deemed worthy of faith, as if the originals were being displayed.

Therefore, it is unlawful for anyone to devalue, or rashly dare to oppose, this page of our institution, definition, submission, declaration, union, statute, subjection, incorporation, convocation, imposition, revocation, termination, taxation, precept, command, derogation, will, and decree. Should anyone then presume to attempt it, know that he shall incur the wrath of Almighty God and the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

*Given at St. Peter's in Rome, May 29th, in the year of Our Lord's
Incarnation 1517, the fifth year of our pontificate.*

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The History and Context of Ite vos

Dominic V. Monti OFM

It is indeed an honor and pleasure for me to be with you today for this occasion—the commemoration of the five hundredth anniversary of the division of the evangelical brotherhood founded by Francis of Assisi by the papal bull *Ite vos*. As you perhaps know, this event today is our North American attempt to enter a larger process organized by an inter-obediential committee established by our General Ministers in response to Pope Francis’s challenge in 2013: “you [Franciscan friars] should stay united—walk together and grow in common vocation and mission.” Calling themselves “Franciscan Friars in Chapter,” this group provided resources for a series of events in the region of Umbria, since extended to the rest of the world, one of which revolves around our topic today: “*Ite vos*: An inhabited memory for walking together towards the future.”⁴³ The other speakers today will focus on the present and future dimensions of our common Franciscan journey. It is my task to delve into our communal memory—what happened 500 years ago?

For most of friars in the United States, this story is a largely buried and forgotten memory—if indeed we ever really raised it to the surface of our consciousness. If you mention the year 1517 to the average friar, it does ring a bell—“Oh, that’s the year the Franciscan Order was divided in two—Observants and Conventuals—by Pope Leo X” (d. 1521). However, exactly what happened, and more importantly, the *why* and the *how* of that division, remain obscure.

⁴³ See their website, Franciscan Friars in Chapter, <https://ofm.org/blog/franciscan-friars-chapter/>.

We first must remember the wider historical context. The year 1517 was an eventful one in a troubled and complex period of Western history—and Pope Leo X's problem with the Franciscans was just one of the issues facing him that year. He issued *Ite vos* on May 29 in between two important events.⁴⁴ Only two months earlier, on March 16, Pope Leo had concluded the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517). This gathering had been summoned five years earlier under his predecessor, Julius II (d. 1513), with the ostensible agenda of advancing a needed reformation of the Church.⁴⁵ Giles of Viterbo (d. 1532), the general of the Augustinian friars, had given an inspiring opening address: "Human beings should be changed by religion, not religion by human beings"—a recognition that the liberating but challenging Gospel message had been watered down or even corrupted by the weight of Church structures and imbedded practices.⁴⁶ However, that Council ended without achieving any substantial results. Its decrees—although headed in the right direction—were relatively modest, and as one modern historian has asserted, "were stifled by the indifference of the Pope....and the ill will of a Curia unwilling to change its ways."⁴⁷ However, we should place the decree *Ite vos* in this context. One area on which the Council did move was the reform of the religious orders and, as we will see, the papal commission who drew up the decree viewed it as part of that broader effort.⁴⁸

The other major event was observed earlier this very week. On 31 October 1517, the Eve of All Hallows, another Augustinian friar, Martin Luther (d. 1546), published his famous 95 theses on the doctrine of indulgences. Ultimately, this was a much more momentous event, as Luther's act as a concerned professor of theology started a tumultuous chain reaction that would lead to the permanent division of the Church and indeed, all of Western Christian society.

⁴⁴ See the helpful background article by Luigi Pellegrini, "Deepening Historical and Theological Insights," included in the online materials for the *Ite vos* commemoration, Franciscan Friars in Chapter, 25-35.

⁴⁵ I say "ostensible," as the driving force behind Julius's calling the Council was actually to head off a schismatic Council that had been assembled by the King of France, Louis XII (d. 1515), at Pisa.

⁴⁶ See John W. O'Malley, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 139-178.

⁴⁷ Comment by M. Venard, cited in Pellegrini, "Deepening Historical and Theological Insights," 27.

⁴⁸ The assembled bishops did press their perennial grievances against the privileges of the mendicant orders; the religious responded by promising reforms. See O'Malley.

In retrospect then, *Ite vos* seems a relatively small episode in this larger history, an intramural decree that today is pretty much of interest only to us Franciscan friars. Moreover, even we have been largely content to summarize its major provisions in surveys of Franciscan history. I have to confess that in thirty years of teaching such a course, I have been guilty of doing precisely that. This general neglect on the part of historians is evidenced by the fact that until the work of the inter-obediential commission last year, *Ite vos* had never been translated into a modern language! I am very grateful for their work, which I used as a basis to prepare my own annotated translation from the modern critical edition of the original Latin text, which serves as a foreword to this essay.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Franciscans also have to confess that when we did take a deeper look at *Ite vos*, we tended to approach it from the perspective of our respective teams. Even in the sixteenth century, Observant and Conventual chroniclers provided very different interpretations of the events, which continued right down into the twentieth century in the treatments of Heribert Holzapfel (the OFM view)⁵⁰ and Raphael Huber (the Conventual perspective).⁵¹ We therefore must be very grateful to the monumental study of Fr. Pacifico Sella, which came out in 2001.⁵² His detail and objectivity provide an escape from these partisan views.

My task today is to examine the history and context of *Ite vos*. Its author, Pope Leo, offers us a good deal of help here, as we have only to look at the opening section of the bull itself to discover the broad historical context in which it stands. The title is a line from the parable in Matthew's Gospel where a vineyard owner goes in search of workers to gather his harvest of grapes.⁵³ Here Leo chooses to use an agricultural image, as did Nicholas III (d. 1280) in his classic exposition of the Franciscan Rule—*Exiit qui seminat* (1279).⁵⁴ However, Leo will expand his Gospel text—which portrays the vineyard owner going out at different times during

⁴⁹ Meseguer Fernández, "La bula 'Ite vos,'" 257-361. This valuable study contains both the final text of the bull as well as earlier drafts.

⁵⁰ Heribert Holzapfel, *The History of the Franciscan Order* (1909), trans. Antonine Tibesar and Gervase Brinkmann (Teutopolis, IL: St. Joseph Seminary, 1945).

⁵¹ Raphael Huber, *A Documented History of the Franciscan Order* (Milwaukee: Nowiny Publishing Apostolate, 1944).

⁵² Sella, *Leone X*.

⁵³ Precisely Mt 20:4: "Ite et vos in vineam meam"—"You also go into my vineyard." The final version of the bull left out the *et* ("also").

⁵⁴ "The sower went out to sow his seed" (Mt 13:3); see FA:ED III:737-767.

the day—into an extended allegory on the previous three hundred years of Franciscan history.

I first should note that, like his predecessor, Pope Leo begins by asserting that the Franciscan movement is especially dear to Christ—as in a special way it closely follows his footprints:

Even though he took care of everyone and managed everything that he did, nevertheless, among his other seedlings, which, through his Father he planted in the ground of the Church militant, there was one that he looked after with such ardent love, that everywhere he would call it his own... This is the sacred religion of the Friars Minor...that holy and immaculate religion in which we may contemplate the presence of the Redeemer as through a spotless mirror. Through it, one can admire the form of life of Christ and the apostles. It evokes what is divine, angelic, most perfect, and in full conformity to Christ—so much so that it can justly be called his own. . .

The bull then continues, developing the allegory of the workers in the vineyard. As Leo describes the workers who came at dawn, he employs the same apocalyptic imagery used by Bonaventure (d. 1274), in his *Legenda Major*, alluding to a privileged role of Francis in the history of salvation:

To cultivate this vineyard, the Master of the Household sent, *early in the morning*,⁵⁵ *from the rising of the sun, an Angel ascending from the east, with the sign of the living God*,⁵⁶ the blessed Francis, who, along with companions of admirable sanctity, laid the first foundations of this vineyard.

However, as Leo continues the allegory, we quickly see that the work of this founding generation apparently did not endure, for:

In the third hour, religious men, led by blessed Bonaventure, succeeded them; with the power and help of the Holy

⁵⁵ Mt 20:1.

⁵⁶ Rev 7:2. Bonaventure applies this passage to St. Francis in his LMj, prol. (FA:ED II:527).

Trinity, they repaired the walls of this vineyard already threatening to fall into ruin.

“Already threatening to fall into ruin”? What had happened so quickly? Ironically, we in 2017 might actually be in a better position to answer this question than the authors of *Ite vos*. This is because fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), in the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, told religious men and women that the up-to-date renewal of their congregations depended on their first returning to “their primitive inspiration,...Therefore the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully acknowledged and maintained.”⁵⁷ This mandate set in motion an unprecedented historical retrieval of our early Franciscan sources, ultimately yielding the massive three-volume *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*.⁵⁸ In so doing, we discovered that the simple formula of going back to the sources did not yield clear results and indeed involves some fundamental tensions. As Irish Franciscan Colin Garvey put it, “If the Franciscans are to go back to their roots, the question arises immediately, ‘What roots?’ Are they to try to recapture the lifestyle of Francis and his first followers, from about 1209 to 1219?...or the lifestyle of the main body of the Order, as it was developing under the ministers [in the 1220s]?”⁵⁹ The point I am making here is that the threatening to fall into ruin of Francis’s brotherhood of which *Ite vos* speaks was not simply a matter of the second generation of friars failing to live up to their Rule. Rather, it involved a significant transformation of the way these friars conceived of their Gospel way of life—a transformation in which the papacy itself played a major part.

Five years ago, Michael Cusato wrote a fine essay on Francis and the early Franciscan movement. He concluded:

The charism of Francis and his [first] brothers would continue in the life of the Franciscan family. However, the understanding of that charism, at least since the chapter of 1220, was no longer uniform among the friars. Already by the general chapter of 1230, significant controversies were beginning to arise over the precise understanding of the

⁵⁷ PerCar, 2.

⁵⁸ FA:ED.

⁵⁹ Colin Garvey, OFM, “Twisted Roots and Muddled Sources,” *The Cord* 24 (1984): 68-83, here 74-75.

wording used in the definitive Rule and the intention of Francis. Indeed, the seeds of the future controversies over the observance of evangelical poverty were already sown in this famous chapter. Franciscan history from this point forward will forever be marked by the unease and co-existence of these two, quite different, forms of Franciscan life and work: each challenging the other to remain faithful to the founding charism or to be open to the needs of the Church at any given time. For both aspects were, in some way, already present in the person of Francis.⁶⁰

So just what was the founding charism of which Cusato speaks?—what Francis called living “according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel?”⁶¹ Those of you who have taken my course in Franciscan history will remember that I isolate four main elements of that charism. Two are contained in their very name: *Fratres Minores*.

First, they were brothers. This identity was primary. The word “brotherhood” describes what they had created among themselves when they left the social dynamics of Assisi—a group of men, from all walks of life, each moved by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who accepted each other for who they were, and bonded together in a network of relationships characterized by mutual love, care, and support.

Moreover, they were lesser ones—that brotherhood was created by the fact that each of them had taken to heart the first Gospel text the brothers encountered when they were discerning their way of life: Jesus’s advice to the rich young man to “sell everything you possess and give it to the poor; then come and follow me.”⁶² These brothers had each taken the radical step of leaving all things. Consequently, as their Rule stated—they lived “without anything of their own.”⁶³ They supported themselves through their daily work, hiring themselves out as day laborers, or

⁶⁰ Michael Cusato, OFM, “Francis and the Franciscan Movement (1181/82-1226),” *The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi*, ed. Michael Robson (Cambridge: University Press, 2012), 32.

⁶¹ Test 14 = FA:ED I:125.

⁶² Mt 19:21; Lk 18:22. This story is first related in *The Anonymous of Perugia* 2.10-11. See Michael Blastic, “Our Franciscan Evangelical Way of Life and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century,” *The Cord* 59 (2009): 259-280, here 263, 268, 270-272.

⁶³ ER 1.1-2 = FA:ED I:63 64; LR 1.1 = FA:ED I:100.

begging when they could not find work. As payment, they accepted the necessities of life—food, clothing, a place to live—but not money. As little people in society having a precarious economic status, they also desired to be without power, “simple and subject to all.”⁶⁴

Third, the vitality of that brotherhood depended on their desire to seek, above everything else, “the Spirit of the Lord and its holy activity.”⁶⁵ This meant, not simply a commitment to the liturgical prayer of the larger Church, but, more importantly, creating the inner space to be attentive to the working of the Lord in their daily life—continually calling them to deeper levels of conversion. The early brotherhood therefore had a strong eremitical component—with the brothers withdrawing as the Spirit moved them to remote places for prayer and contemplation.

Finally, their brotherhood had a mission: “sent into the whole world: that you may bear witness to His voice in word and deed and bring everyone to know that there is no one *who is all-powerful* except him.”⁶⁶ A key text here for the brothers was Luke 10—the third Gospel text they encountered when discerning their way of life: Jesus’s sending out of the seventy disciples. As Michael Blastic observes: “This text, which is embodied in the fourteenth chapter of the early Rule, assumes that the brothers are itinerant, and that as they go about the world, they meet people where they find them, engage them in honest conversation in the homes that are opened up to them, eating and drinking what is set before them, promoting peace, and in and through this encounter, pointing to the nearness of the kingdom of God.”⁶⁷

These characteristics of the early fraternity’s life and mission describe a group predominantly composed of penitent laymen. We really do not see here any focus on formal ministry exercised on behalf of the institutional Church. However, this picture would rapidly change. After 1220, more and more zealous young clerics were attracted to this vibrant evangelical movement, and they naturally wanted to employ their education and pastoral skills as Franciscans. Their desires dovetailed with the vision of prelates—including Popes Honorius III (d. 1227) and Gregory IX

⁶⁴ Test 19 = FA:ED I:125.

⁶⁵ LR 10.8 = FA:ED I:105.

⁶⁶ LtOrd 9 = FA:ED I:117.

⁶⁷ Blastic, “Our Franciscan Evangelical Way,” 273. Blastic makes a point of distinguishing this account in Luke 10 from the account in Luke 9, where Jesus sends out the twelve apostles. Luke 10 contains the greeting of peace and the freedom of “eating and drinking whatever they provide.”

(d. 1241)—who wanted to enlist the Lesser Brothers in the Church’s pastoral mission: especially the agenda set by the Fourth Lateran Council to provide a dedicated corps of preachers and confessors for the People of God.⁶⁸

We see at work here the second dynamic that Cusato identifies in Franciscan history: many Lesser Brothers wanting to be open to the needs of the Church at any given time. This desire to meet the Church’s pastoral needs steadily accelerated during the 1220s and 1230s. In fact, by 1237, Pope Gregory IX could define the very purpose of the Order as meeting the pastoral reform agenda of the Fourth Lateran Council.⁶⁹ To accomplish this mission, however, the Order’s way of life underwent a thorough transformation. By 1240, the mainstream of the community had rapidly become, as historian Duncan Nimmo puts it: “clerical, educated, urban and conventual. Each characteristic spelt modification of the fraternity’s primitive pattern.”⁷⁰ Clerical: the principal work of the Order was increasingly identified by both the hierarchy and the laity as doctrinal and moral preaching and the administration of the sacrament of confession. Educated: preparation for this ministry demanded that friars be trained in theology, and so we quickly see the Order developing an organized study system. Urban: Franciscans gradually abandoned the places on the margins of society they frequented in the early years, instead moving into towns to afford them the maximum public availability. Conventual: this new style of life meant that the friars gave up their itinerant lifestyle, instead settling down in fixed residences (convents) following a structured daily routine typical of other religious orders.

Furthermore, the papacy played a key role in this transformation. The first papal bulls of 1219 and 1220 encouraging bishops to permit the Lesser Brothers into their dioceses focused on their preaching ministry; in 1220, the papacy demanded the friars adopt a more structured way of life in the bull *Cum secundum consilium*. Most important here was the

⁶⁸ For these developments, summarized in the next several paragraphs, see the long-standard treatment of John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 46-105, and the more recent treatment of Grado G. Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis: History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism until the Early Sixteenth Century*, trans. Raphael Bonnanno (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 2009), 80-163.

⁶⁹ *Quoniam abundavit* (6 April 1237). The Pope refers to the “office of preaching, for which they (the Franciscans) are assigned by virtue of their profession,” FA:ED I:575-577.

⁷⁰ Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Medieval Franciscan Order (1226-1538)* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 55.

1230 decree *Quo elongati*, which offered a definitive interpretation of their very Rule of life, stating the friars were not bound by Francis's *Tes-tament* and creating a mechanism for them to accept the monetary alms of lay benefactors, assuring them greater financial stability to exercise their ministries.

In this re-focusing of the Lesser Brothers' mission, what was the effect on the other founding values? Brotherhood? Would exercising a professional ministry lead to clerical elitism? Minority? We have just mentioned that larger houses and a professional ministry required a more secure income. And the eremitical dimension? Would the demands of maintaining a conventual routine and a formal ministry stifle the free moving of the Spirit? Fr. David Flood's verdict is harsh: his treatment of the transformation of the Order in the 1220s and 30s is entitled "the movement waylaid" and does not hesitate to use the word "betrayal."⁷¹ We see that, by the 1240s, some friars who remembered the early years began telling stories about Francis and the primitive brotherhood, implicitly criticizing the way the Order was developing, in Cusato's terms reasserting the charism. These stories occupy an important place in Volume II of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*.

Ite vos singles out the contribution of Bonaventure during this third hour. During his long tenure as general minister (1257-1274), he certainly tried to maintain a balance between these two poles. On the one hand, he enthusiastically accepted, indeed, strenuously defended, the apostolic ministry of the friars in the Church; on the other, he demanded fidelity to certain core Franciscan values—as those who have read his scathing encyclical letters to the friars know! The general constitutions of Narbonne were intended, as he said, to provide a hedge to assure that the friars would remain "in bounds," faithful to their vocation as poor Gospel preachers. If their ministry in the Church were to be successful, it would have to be founded on the authenticity of their life. Pope Nicholas III's constitution on the observance of the Rule, *Exiit qui seminat* (1279), canonized Bonaventure's teaching, defending evangelical poverty as an indispensable foundation for the Order. Following *Quo elongati*, Nicholas differentiated sharply between ownership and rights of use. He

⁷¹ David Flood, *Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement* (Quezon City, Philippines: The Franciscan Institute of Asia, 1989), 148-167.

clarified that other people had to own the things the friars used and that their rights to use them could not smack of luxury or excess.⁷²

We have seen then, what happened during the third hour of Franciscan history. What about the sixth hour? After Bonaventure's death, the precarious equilibrium he sought to achieve broke down. More and more friars either could not or would not maintain the official standards of *Exiit qui seminat*, especially with regard to poverty. This sparked a strong reaction in the celebrated Spiritual movement, whose leaders attempted to reassert the primitive values. As you can read in the sources printed in Volume III of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, the Spiritual representatives boldly denounced the current state of the Order in apocalyptic terms, some of them advocating the alternative of seceding from what they viewed as a diseased body. Although most of the Order's leaders did all they could to quash their movement, the Spirituels managed to gain the ear of Pope Clement V (d. 1314) who found much of their case against current conditions in the Order to be justified. The arguments of both sides were aired before the Council of Vienne (1311-12), and the resulting decree *Exivi de paradiso* (1312) established that the brothers were bound to certain strict or poor uses of things by virtue of their Rule.⁷³ This was the dynamic explaining the sixth hour alluded to in the prologue to *Ite vos*.⁷⁴

However, the drama for the Franciscans did not end there. Pope Clement's successor, John XXII (d. 1334), found himself dealing with renegade friars who refused to accept the legitimacy of any papal declarations. The subsequent debate over the nature of Christ's poverty ended up with John denying the claim of *Exiit qui seminat*—and the entire Franciscan tradition—that by renouncing all his possessions, Francis was perfectly imitating the life of Christ and his first disciples. Furthermore, on a legal level, the Pope absolved the Holy See of its responsibility of holding in trust the goods of the Franciscans, eliminating the office of the lay

⁷² *Quo elongati* (14 August 1279), FA:ED 3:737-764. For more detail on this period, see Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 123-176; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 165-235.

⁷³ *Exivi de paradiso* (6 May 1312), FA:ED III:767-783.

⁷⁴ "After them, as in the sixth hour, some friars went forth who were fervent in spirit, who, comforted by the Holy Council of Vienne, as though sent by God, brought back to their beginnings the rigors of discipline, then almost completely worn out." For this period, see Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 177-204, 307-319; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 237-317.

apostolic syndic who accepted donations and managed the friars' goods in the name of the papacy.⁷⁵

This decision meant that friars now were often left to manage their own property; they increasingly accepted landed estates, entering the economic system of buying and selling things like any other religious community. Many local fraternities received privileges and dispensations legitimating these practices. Franciscans were also caught up in the general social turmoil of the fourteenth century and the impact of the Black Death. Like other religious orders at the time, we see a general breakdown of discipline among the Franciscans: a tendency for friars to go on for higher studies to gain perks afforded to a friar elite, to secure their own private sources of income, and to obtain outside jobs to escape the demands of community life. Thus, we find the mystic and reformer Brigid of Sweden (d. 1373) sternly accusing the Franciscans, "saying the devil had turned many of them 'from humility to pride, from reasoned poverty to greed, from true obedience to self-reliance.'"⁷⁶

And yet, that same fourteenth century witnessed small groups of friars being inspired by stories about the early days of the Order in unofficial sources like the popular "Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions" and its Italian translation, the *Fioretti*. Such stories gained new life when Bartholomew of Pisa (Bartholomew Rinonico, d. ca. 1401) incorporated many of them into his massive compendium, *The Conformity of the Life of St. Francis with the Life of the Lord Jesus*, officially approved in 1399 and thus circulated throughout the Order.

Paoluccio of Trinci (d. 1391), a humble friar in Foligno, Italy, had a desire to follow the Rule "to the letter" and received permission in 1368 to retire to the remote hermitage of Brugliano with a few companions. Their way of life revived many of aspects of the founding charism that had been sacrificed in the name of ministerial effectiveness: a focus on contemplative prayer, equality among lay and ordained friars, and a genuinely poor life. The movement spread, and by the time of Paoluccio's death there were some twenty friaries in central Italy of what was being

⁷⁵ For these documents, see FA:ED III:783-790.

⁷⁶ Cited in Gert Melville, *The World of Medieval Monasticism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 286. For this and the following paragraphs, see Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 320-389, 441-447; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 319-373.

called the Observant Reform. Just about the same time, we see this desire among friars to retreat to rural hermitages also emerging in Spain.

Reform currents were also springing up in France in the early 1390s. In contrast to the Italian and Spanish reformers, however, the French Observants did not have an eremitical focus; rather, their goal was to reform an existing urban friary engaging in active ministry, following the Rule according to the old official standards of the Order. Since the friars of this “regular observance” were explicitly reacting against the “non-observant” practices that dominated their provinces, they wanted to obtain some autonomy from provincial structures in order to achieve their goals. In 1407, the Avignon Pope, Clement XII, heeded their desires and gave the observant friaries in each of the French provinces the authority to elect a vicar provincial to manage their affairs. However, when a few years later France switched allegiance to the Pisa Pope, Alexander V (d. 1410), this privilege was revoked.⁷⁷ The French Observants refused to accept this decision, however, and took their case to the theology faculty of the University of Paris, which sided with them. Therefore, when the general Council of Constance (1414-1418) was assembled as the supreme authority in the Church in order to end the Great Western Schism and work for the “reformation of the Church in head and in members,” the Observants appealed directly to the Council.

In 1415, the Council granted their request, allowing the Observant houses in three of the French provinces to elect a vicar provincial, who would be only nominally subject to the provincial minister. Furthermore, these vicar provincials could then elect a vicar general to preside over their movement with the same power as the minister general. Any individual friar or house within the province would have the ability to accept reform and pass from the authority of the provincial to that of the vicar.⁷⁸

This decree created the dynamic for the ninth hour of the allegory in *Ite vos*. By the time the Council ended, Italian Observants—led by figures such as Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444, singled out in *Ite vos*) and John of Capistrano (d. 1456)—were leaving their hermitages and plunging into active ministry. Returning to the older practice of popular itinerant preaching, they built up a solid following among the laity, spreading

⁷⁷ Alexander himself was a Franciscan, and not sympathetic to the cause of what he viewed as division in the Order.

⁷⁸ *Supplicationibus personarum* (23 September 1415).

their vision of what Franciscan life should be. These leaders found an ally in Pope Martin V (d. 1431), who had been elected by the Council of Constance in 1417 to carry out an agenda of reform. The Pope wrote to the general chapter of 1421 deploring laxity in the Order; when reform measures failed to gain much traction, he issued a flurry of papal licenses allowing the Observants to found new houses all over Italy. Then, in 1428, he annulled John XXII's decree of 1322, saying that the papacy would once again assume ownership of the Order's goods, placing the management of the friars' temporal affairs into the hands of a lay apostolic syndic. Martin's efforts culminated at the chapter of 1430. There the Observants agreed to give up their autonomy under their vicars if the entire Order would adopt a set of reform constitutions. Largely drawn up by John of Capistrano, they called for all friars to observe the Rule and live in common, establishing a minimum standard of poverty that entailed divesting themselves of income-producing property and prohibiting the use of money.⁷⁹

The story of moving from this ninth to the eleventh hour—a space of almost nine decades—is a complicated and dreary one.⁸⁰ The first major event was the failure of the constitutions of 1430 to gain general acceptance; just months after the chapter, strong resistance from the grassroots compelled the minister general to approach Pope Martin, who issued a bull legitimizing the right of houses to own property and enjoy fixed regular incomes.⁸¹ This move doomed the hope for uniform standards of Franciscan life. In response, the disgruntled Observants demanded that the new Pope, Eugene IV (d. 1447), restore their provincial vicars. Eugene still hoped that the Order's leadership would embrace a thoroughgoing reform; it was no secret that at the chapter of 1443 he favored the election of an Observant, Albert of Sarteano (d. 1450), as minister general. When this attempt failed, he appointed two vicar generals for the Observants, who were given wide powers to organize the Observant friars in their regions. Three years later, with the bull *Ut sacra*,⁸² he made

⁷⁹ “Then, at the ninth hour the Lord stirred up the spirit of a youth, or rather a few friars, who under the guidance and authority of the blessed Bernardine, the herald of the Name of Jesus, and trusting in the support of the Council of Constance, revived the Order, which had languished, indeed, was almost dead.”

⁸⁰ See Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 447-516; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 372-412.

⁸¹ *Ad statum* (23 August 1431).

⁸² *Ut sacra* (11 January 1446).

this arrangement permanent. By this move, Eugene in effect organized the Regular Observants as an autonomous congregation within the larger Order. The Cismontane vicar provincials and their Ultramontane counterparts met in their own general chapters to elect a vicar general for themselves and draw up their own general constitutions. The minister general enjoyed only the right to confirm their elections; once in office, the vicars general could operate independently from him.⁸³ This large congregation created by the bull *Ut sacra* were the Observants “of the Family” referred to in *Ite vos*.

Let us move now to the second section of the prologue of *Ite vos*. As Pope Leo attests, after Pope Eugene’s decision, a strident opposition developed between the two parties.

Just as among the workers of the vineyard in the Gospel parable, when the ones who came later were treated as being equivalent to the ones who arrived earlier, a great clamor arose, as kings, princes, communities and peoples attest. News has reached us that serious contentions, quarrels and clashes are occurring among the friars of this religion, over [alleged] superiority and higher degrees of perfection, incidents that have been increasing day by day throughout the world.

By the latter decades of the fifteenth century, these quarrels and clashes between the Conventuals and the upstart Observants became ever more acrimonious, as the two branches competed for vocations and public support. The Conventuals, who held the official leadership of the Order, defended their position by emphasizing the bonds of fraternity. Francis had commanded all the brothers to be obedient to them, the legitimate minister general and provincial ministers, but the Observants, by demanding their autonomy, were divisive. The Observants, for their part, replied that they were only attempting to observe the Rule; since the leaders of the Order were allowing friars to break it, thus allowing the body to become corrupt, they demanded the freedom to live what they viewed as the authentic Franciscan life under their own superiors.

⁸³ Eugene had made a symbolic statement of his preference the preceding year, transferring the friary of Aracoeli, since 1250 the Roman headquarters of the minister general, to the Cismontane vicar general.

There were also other important factors at work during this period reflected in the text of *Ite vos*. First, not mentioned in the prologue but evident in the various provisions, is that movements of reform among Franciscans had multiplied. Besides the Observants “of the Family,” there were a number of reformed friars living *sub ministris* (under the authority of the leaders of the Order). The largest of these was the so-called Colettans. This group stemmed from the desire of St. Colette of Corbie (d. 1447), a reforming leader among the Poor Clares, to have small communities of friars sympathetic with her ideals attached to her monasteries. In 1427 the minister general appointed Henry of Baume, who was already an advisor to Colette, as his commissary to organize friars for this purpose. Living by distinctive statutes, this movement spread well beyond the Colletine monasteries and by the early 1500s were almost as numerous in France as the Regular Observants. Elsewhere in France and Germany there were also a number of friaries who had agreed to follow the Martinian constitutions of 1430.

Then, there were three smaller reform groups under the minister general, which enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy under their own vicars. The first, the Amadeans, was a reform congregation founded near Milan the late 1460s by a Portuguese nobleman, Amadeo Menez de Silva (d. 1482); by the late 1400s they had about thirty houses. The second was the Clareni, the progeny of the Spiritual leader Angelo Clareno (d. 1337), who had rebelled against church authority in the early 1300s. Later in the century, however, they had been reconciled to the Church, living under the authority of local bishops. In 1473, they were received back into communion with the rest of the Order but allowed to elect their own vicar general. The third group—variously called the Discalced, the Friars of the Holy Gospel, or the Friars of the Capuche—owed their origins to hermitages established in Spain by Juan de Puebla in the late 1400s. After Juan’s death, a disciple, Juan de Guadalupe, wishing to lead a life of the strictest observance, gained exemption for the group in 1496. Thus, in 1500 the Order of Friars Minor was an organizational nightmare, with a proliferation of governing documents and a splintered authority structure.

A second factor evident from the text of *Ite vos* is the prominent role that lay rulers were increasingly playing in this Franciscan controversy. Pope Leo states that kings, princes, and communes have been besieging him

to take action, citing a veritable litany of the crowned heads of Europe.⁸⁴ Largely, these rulers favored the Observants or other groups of reformed friars, but regardless, were of one accord that something had to be done. The vigor and authenticity of the reformed friars had captured the popular imagination. Especially important here was the return of the Regular Observants to popular itinerant preaching, which brought them into close relationship with local governments and even some monarchs.⁸⁵ In Italy, a key factor was the Observants' strong promotion of the *monti di pieta*, an early form of credit union, where the working poor could take out loans. The most prominent of the civil governments favoring the Observants was Spain. There the Observant friar Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (d. 1517) was named the confessor of Queen Isabella in 1492. Three years later, she nominated him as Archbishop of Toledo and inspector of all religious orders in the country. With the clout of the government behind him, Cisneros applied tremendous pressure on Conventual friaries in Spain to join the Observants or face civil penalties or even suppression.

The papacy too recognized the growing popularity of the Observants among the laity. In the wake of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Callistus III (d. 1458) specifically commissioned the Observants as apostolic preachers to go about Central and Eastern Europe to raise crusading armies in response to the Turkish threat to the Balkans and Hungary.⁸⁶ Likewise, Sixtus IV (d. 1484), who had been minister general of the Order and therefore naturally sympathetic to the Conventual party, nonetheless turned to the Observants in 1480 to recruit troops against new Turkish advances. This made it natural that Leo X himself, in the very years leading up to *Ite vos*, would also turn to Observant preachers for another great task: raising funds for the fabric of St. Peter, to finance the construction of the vast new basilica begun by Julius II (d. 1513). This year, as we recall Luther's protest against the Dominican preacher of indulgences, John Tetzel (d. 1519), we should realize that other orders were comparative small fry when compared with the vast sums raked in by the Observants. During the year 1514-15 the Observant

⁸⁴ "...especially from our beloved sons in Christ, the Emperor-elect Maximilian; and the illustrious kings, Francis, the most Christian (king) of France; the Catholic Charles of Spain; Henry VIII of England; Manuel of Portugal and the Algarves; Louis of Hungary and Bohemia; Sigismund of Poland; Christian of Denmark. . ."

⁸⁵ On these developments, see Sella, *Leone X*, 203-221.

⁸⁶ One immediately thinks of the key role of John of Capistrano in this regard.

Franciscans raised 8,150 ducats, in comparison to 4,793 from all other sources; in 1515-16 the Observants brought in 11,624 compared to 8,723 from other sources. And, during the year 1516-17, precisely when the Papal commission was considering the fate of the Franciscans, the Observants mounted an all-out effort, pulling in some 26,041 ducats, in comparison to 8,740 from all other sources (of which 1200 came from Conventual Franciscans).⁸⁷ Not only were monarchs sympathetic to the Observants, the papal curia realized they were a major funding source for its operations.

Pope Leo's little allegory of Franciscan history finally brings us to the immediate background for *Ite vos*: "lately, in these last days, almost to the last hour, other men have appeared, zealots for the house of Israel."⁸⁸ This mainly refers to the reforming efforts of Giles Delfini, minister general from 1500 to 1506. Under his leadership, the chapter of 1500 had drafted a set of statutes designed to enforce higher standards of observance. Giles devoted his term as general traveling around the provinces, trying to enforce these regulations, but also attempting to curb the autonomy of the Observants in the process. His model was the *reformati sub ministris*, especially the Colettan friars in France.⁸⁹ But despite his valiant efforts, Giles failed in his attempts to bring reform throughout the Order; he finally urged Pope Julius II to call a most general (*generalissimum*) chapter in 1506, which would bring together the leaders of all the major parties in the Order. This chapter ended in a stalemate, but two things were becoming evident. First, Giles's efforts showed that the fundamental divide in the Order was no longer really between Conventuals and Observants, but between reformed friars—both Observants of the Family and the various groups of reformed Conventuals under the ministers—and a block of Conventuals opposed to reform efforts. Second, it made clear that the Franciscans were incapable of resolving their problems: a solution could only come from the Holy See.

Julius II did not provide much leadership in this regard. Finally, however, with the Fifth Lateran Council urging the Pope to take action and appeals that grew ever more insistent from rulers, Leo X finally decided

⁸⁷ See Sella, *Leone X*, 279-286.

⁸⁸ This final decade and a half leading up to the chapter of 1517 is covered by Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 569-582; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 409-418.

⁸⁹ Pellegrini provides a good description of Giles's efforts, 29-30.

to move on the matter.⁹⁰ Early in 1516, he set up a commission to “investigate diligently the causes and origins of the quarrels and divisions” in the Order of Friars Minor and to “explore thoroughly appropriate remedies to settle these disputes.”⁹¹ This commission consisted of four cardinals, including Domenico Grimani, Cardinal Bishop of Albano (d. 1523), the Cardinal Protector.⁹² Four friar consultants were also named: John Glapion, a Flemish Observant and close confidant of the future Emperor Charles V (d. 1558); Boniface of Ceva, brilliant advocate of the reformed under the ministers; Alfonso Lozano, procurator general in the Roman Curia for the Cismontane Observants; and Juan de Costa, procurator general of the Ultramontane Observants. It should be noted that none of these friars belonged to the unreformed Conventual party.

The first recommendation of the commission was that the Pope should summon another *capitulum generalissimum* (“most general chapter”) in Rome at Pentecost, 1517, bringing together not only the usual provincial ministers and representative custodian from each province, but also the leaders of all the various reform groups within the Order. Leo accordingly issued a decree, *Romanum pontificem*, on 11 July 1516, summoning all parties to Rome the following year.

Meanwhile, the commission continued working on what they viewed as the appropriate remedies for resolving the disputes in the Franciscan Order. These clearly took the side of the reformers in the Order. We have already seen that the prologue of the draft document, explaining the historical context for the bull, reflected the reform agenda. And the various provisions that the commission proposed simply restated earlier reform proposals, especially those advanced to Giles Delfini in 1503-1505 by the vicar of the Ultramontane Observants, Marcial Boulier.⁹³ The papal commission apparently finished its draft document by Christmas of 1516. We know that Giles of Viterbo, prior general of the Augustinian friars, was aware of its content in January 1517, and that in April the Portuguese ambassador managed to obtain a copy, which he sent

⁹⁰ Besides the detailed study of Sella, these developments leading up to *Ite vos* are covered by Moorman, *History of the Franciscan Order*, 582-85; also Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 418-425.

⁹¹ *Ite vos*, prologue 2.

⁹² The others were Lorenzo Pucci, personal secretary to the Pope; Bernardino de Carvajal, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia; and Pietro Accolti.

⁹³ Sella, *Leone X*, 288.

to King Manuel (d. 1521) to give him a heads-up on what was about to occur.⁹⁴

However, in the final weeks before the Chapter was due to open, a body of resistance to the draft began to emerge among some Cardinals in the Roman Curia, while letters continued to arrive from various governments until literally the last moment. These late developments would affect the final version of the bull.

Let us now turn to the solution to the Franciscan question that Pope Leo offered with *Ite vos*. Toward the end of May, a crowd of several thousand friars massed in Rome to be present for the excitement of the chapter—Pentecost was to fall on May 31. On May 25, the Pope appointed a commission of seven cardinals to manage the discussions with the chapter delegates on behalf of the Holy See. The following day, all the delegates gathered at St. Peter's basilica in consistory with most of the cardinals in the Pope's presence. The interventions that day showed that neither side had moved beyond the impasse of the last most general chapter eleven years earlier. However, the day was significant, for that morning, the Pope had received in audience the ambassador of the Doge of Venice, urging him not to interfere with the current state of the two entrenched groups of friars, but to simply separate them into two independent orders. On May 27, a hint of what was going to happen emerged when the Pope and his steering commission heard the two groups separately. The minister general, Bernardino Prati, stated that the Conventuals were not prepared to give up their privileges; in response, the Pope gathered the Observants and asked their Vicar Generals if they would be willing to work with the reformed Conventual faction. They replied yes. Later, the reformed Conventuals were called in; they too signaled their willingness to cooperate in reaching a solution.

When all the delegates were gathered again on May 28 and 29, it was clear that the position of the main body of the Conventuals was firm; they wished to maintain their privileges. In response, the Observants said they were not willing to accept another unreformed minister general. Meanwhile, the Pope made his final decision. On May 29 he cleared the deck for the election of a new minister general by kicking the incumbent, Bernadino Prati, "upstairs," nominating him as titular bishop of

⁹⁴ Sella, *Leone X*, 287-294.

Athens. He also signed the definitive version of *Ite vos*, which reflected the discussions that had taken place over the previous days.

On May 30, the Vigil of Pentecost, the Pope's decision was announced to the conclave by one of the cardinals: that the body of reformed friars would henceforth be regarded as the Order of Friars Minor, and that only their representatives would have the right to elect the new minister general. This startling announcement called an uproar in the basilica. With it, the most general chapter effectively came to an end, as the unreformed Conventual friars, hearing they would be excluded from the election, withdrew from the assembly and gathered at their church, the basilica of the Twelve Apostles, where they proceeded to elect their own general, Antonio Marcello. Meanwhile, Cristoforo Numai, Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants, proceeded with the solemn reading of *Ite vos* in the presence of the Pope.

Exactly what was stated in the bull? Here you should refer to the translation of *Ite vos* previously included in this volume. This translation, following the critical edition of Meseguer Fernández, has nine sections or titles. We have already examined the first section, the preamble, which itself is divided into two parts. As we have detailed, the first lays out the broad historical developments and the second, the immediate context, the current disputes going on within the Order.

The second section treats the immediate matter at hand, that is, the stipulations for the election of the minister general. It begins by restating the ideal contained in the Rule, which the Conventuals had always emphasized: "that there should be one Minister General of the whole Order with full powers over all individual friars of the same Order. Each and every friar is bound strictly to obey him in all those matters that do not go against God, their soul, or the Rule."⁹⁵ It would seem at first there is nothing new. However, as the section continues, we see a dramatic reversal of past practice: from now on, the election of the minister general is entrusted only to the reformed provincial ministers and custodians. To accomplish this, the provincial vicars of the Observant friars were now recognized as the true ministers of their provinces. Further, the Pope specified that "no friar shall be elected if he is not leading a reformed life."⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Ite vos*, 2.1.

⁹⁶ *Ite vos*, 2.4.

The next day being the feast of Pentecost, no session was held, but on the following day, June 1, the Observant delegates and the representatives of the various reformed Conventual groups gathered at the church of Aracoeli; the bull was again read aloud. The cardinal presidents then certified the eligible capitular delegates according to the provisions of the bull. These then proceeded to elect Cristoforo Numai (d. 1528), vicar general of the Cismontane Observants, as minister general of the whole Order of Friars Minor. The outgoing general, Anthony Marcello, was ordered to turn over the seal of the Order to Numai. In addition, this new provision on the minister general, reacting against the prevailing tendency to keep re-electing the same friars to office,⁹⁷ strictly limited the general to a six-year term. Furthermore, to assure geographical balance, the office had to alternate between a Cismontane and an Ultramontane friar.

The next provision (section 3) of *Ite vos* seems strange to us, as it actually would work against maintaining a unified authority in the newly reconstituted Order. However, the friars on the papal commission who drew up the draft document accepted the status quo in the Order at the time—that is, Pope Eugene’s division of the Observants into Cismontane and Ultramontane families. Reform efforts in Spain, France, and Germany had quite different origins than in Italy and thus had developed their own regional customs. Over the previous seventy years, these differences were accentuated by the fact that Ultramontane and Cismontane friars held their own general chapters and developed their own legislation. Therefore, to ensure respect for local conditions, and given the difficulty of communications at the time, *Ite vos* created a new office, that of commissary general. If, for example, the minister general were a Cismontane friar, he was asked to delegate his authority in the Ultramontane zone to a commissary general, elected in a general chapter of the friars in his own zone. In effect, this meant the Order would have two more-or-less equal heads, one of whom enjoyed the title of minister general for six years, which would then switch to his counterpart.

Section 4 deals with the provincial ministers. It spells out what had already been stated in section 2, that is, in those provinces where the provincial minister was not a reformed Conventual (that is, the vast

⁹⁷ For example, Francesco Nanni, called “Samson,” held the office of minister general from 1475–99.

majority of provinces), “the vicars of the friars of the Observance.... are henceforth and forever the undoubted ministers of those provinces.” It also emphasizes that every friar is to be fully subject to them, including those who had previously been members of a distinct reform group. In addition, this provision limited the provincial minister to a term of three years.

Section 5 finally determines exactly which friars are to be included under the term “Reformed,” or “those who observe the Rule of blessed Francis purely and simply.” These were both the Observants of the Family and the Reformed under the ministers, including the distinct groups of the Amadeans, the Colettans, the Clareni, and the Discalced. It is here that the definitive version of the bull begins to differ from the draft document considerably. The draft had specified that to be considered reformed a friary must renounce property and fixed incomes in a manner established by law. The definitive version is content to mention the names of the various groups that will form the reconstituted reformed Order. From now on, they are to abandon these previous designations, and be all known in the future as “Friars Minor of St. Francis of the Regular Observance, together or separately”—that is, simply “Friars Minor,” or “Friars of St. Francis (i.e., Franciscans) of the Regular Observance.”

Meseguer Fernández’s edition of *Ite vos* then continues with a Section 6, which consists only of the following sentence: “The Conventuals then, who live according to privileges, should be subject to and obey the same Ministers General and Provincial, in the ways that will be established when our forthcoming letters are published.” Why is this one sentence numbered as a distinct section? It could logically have been tacked on to the preceding one which had spelled out who were the reformed friars of the newly reconstituted Order. The reason Meseguer Fernández created a separate section was to indicate that this one sentence is all that remains of a series of provisions in the draft of *Ite vos*.

These paragraphs—which Pope Leo eliminated in the final document—would have consigned the unreformed Conventuals to gradual extinction. The papal commission that drew up the document, following an agenda of many reformers at the time, envisioned placing all the friaries in each province who were not reformed—that is, who had not renounced the ownership of property and fixed incomes—under the care of a commissary provincial appointed by the Observant provincial

minister. This commissary was to work toward getting these houses to accept reform; if they failed to do so in good time, they could not accept new vocations or ordain more men to the priesthood.⁹⁸ All that remained of these harsh provisions is the simple statement that the Conventual friars will be subject to the (Observant) minister general and provincials in ways that will be determined in a forthcoming document.

That document would come two weeks later in the bull *Omnipotens Deus* (12 June 1517). With this bull, Leo effectively organized the Conventual friars who wished to keep their privileges and possessions as a separate congregation. They were permitted to elect their own master general and their own provincial masters. These were to be subject to the parallel Observant leadership in the same way as the Observant vicars of the Family had previously been subject to the Conventual general and provincial superiors—that is, simply to seek confirmation of their election. Otherwise, the two groups were to work totally independently of each other. The minister general “of the whole Order” was not to interfere in the Conventuals’ internal operations; he or an Observant minister provincial could only make a fraternal visit to a Conventual house if he happened to be in the area. However, in all ceremonies the Observants were to take precedence over the Conventuals.

Returning to *Ite vos*, Section 7, a ban against name-calling, attempted to assure harmony among the friars. It forbade them, under penalty of excommunication, to refer to each other by offensive terms, even by the

⁹⁸ This solution of the commission examining the Franciscans actually follows closely the proposal of two Venetian Camaldolese monks, Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Quirini, who in 1513 had submitted a far-reaching reform agenda to Leo X for consideration at the Fifth Lateran Council: “Holy Father, take special care to lead every religious order to the perfect observance of its rule and to its ancient and holy manner of living...There are some [religious] who serve under the banner of the most correct and tested rules and usages, and who, because they endeavor to keep these rules and usages, are called ‘observant,’ while there are others who, beyond the bare fact that they live together, observe none of their holy rules and customs, or else they omit the more important ones; these have the name ‘conventual.’ Since you, however, will tolerate neither the division of individual rules nor the abuse and depravation involved in a second, deformed way of living, you will carefully endeavor to bring those who are called conventual to the more exact observance of their rule, so that the name itself is abolished. You will accomplish this more easily if you declare that no one may take vows in conventual monasteries; thus, all congregations of religious men and women will deservedly be called observant. Indeed, it would be pointless to glory or boast in the name ‘observant,’ unless the name should be equal to the facts, through a truly exact and perfect observance of the holy rule and customs.” *Libellus to Pope Leo X*, ed. Stephen M. Beall, available at https://www.academia.edu/3614630/Paolo_Giustiniani_and_Pietro_Quirini_Libellus_to_Pope_Leo_X_English_Translation_, 90-93.

titles of their former group. It went on to say that no reformed friar in the newly constituted Order could leave the obedience of his minister to dwell in an unreformed house. On the other hand, as specified in the follow-up bull *Omnipotens Deus*, an individual Conventual friar could always transfer to the Observants. However, no Conventual house could be transferred to the Observance by any secular power; this could occur only by a two-thirds vote of the friars themselves. Also, section 7 strictly forbade any friar to introduce a new sect or reform in the Order without the express consent of the minister general or the provincial minister concerned.

A brief Section 8 mandated that new general constitutions be drawn up to spell out the way of life of the newly unified Order. Then, there was a final section 9, containing legal clauses concerning the publication and enforcement of the document.

What were the consequences of the Pope's decision? On the surface, *Ite vos* represented the vindication and the triumph, institutionally speaking, of the Observants' position. At the time, they were filled with jubilation at Leo's decision. Their minister general was the titular head of a body of reformed Friars Minor, possessing the seal of the whole Order, a judgment which Leo confirmed in a follow-up bull, *Licet alias* on 6 December 1517:

Given that the very brothers of the Observance and Reform have always been true and certain brothers of the Order of blessed Francis and his Rule...without any interruption or division, from the time of the publication of the Rule on the part of blessed Francis until today. . . we decree and command that from every point of view they should be held and considered as such and must be called such.⁹⁹

The Conventuals, in contrast, were bitterly disappointed. However, as the dust settled, it became increasingly clear that Leo had given neither group all it wanted. In that sense, *Ite vos* struck a *via media*. Going into the most general chapter, once they saw the way the wind was blowing, the Conventuals realized that their best-case scenario would be a division of the Order into two independent congregations under two ministers general. They failed to attain this in 1517. Leo's decision, expressed

⁹⁹ Cited in Merlo, *In the Name of St. Francis*, 427.

in *Ite vos* and *Omnipotens Deus*, still maintained—at least on paper—the ideal of one Order of Friars Minor; its provisions consider the Conventuals in some way as subservient to the Observants. On the other hand, the Observants wanted a united reformed Order, which would entail condemning the unreformed Conventuals to gradual extinction, as had been proposed in the draft of *Ite vos*. This they did not achieve.

In some ways, Leo's split decision reflected his own personality. He was a good-natured man who shrank from conflict and desired peace at all costs. He was also very shrewd. Ludwig von Pastor, in his famous *History of the Popes*, writes:

It took him indeed weeks, and even months, before he could make up his mind...but more revolting than his indecision are the want of straightforwardness, nay the falseness, the double-dealing, by which the policy of Leo X, as a true statesman of the Renaissance, was almost actuated. The plan of “steering by two compasses” became second nature to him. Quite unabashed, he acted on the principle that for the sake of being ready for every event, the conclusion of a treaty with one party need offer no obstacle to the conclusion of another in an opposite sense with his opponent. . . .¹⁰⁰

What was the ultimate significance of *Ite vos*? In almost every way, its “failure was obvious from the start.”¹⁰¹ It was envisioned as a bull of union, but it never achieved that goal. Leo's two bulls of 1517 envisioned that the Conventuals would be largely autonomous, but in some way still part of the larger Order. Their superiors—called “masters”—would have to be confirmed by the ministers general and provincial. In fact, this provision would never be enforced, and the Popes who succeeded Leo soon reverted to the older terminology, referring to the “minister general” of the Conventual Franciscans. So the Conventuals and Observants became totally independent of each other, two separate and equal Orders.

More importantly, Leo's goal of uniting all the various reformed groups into “one single body,”¹⁰² renouncing all distinctive titles and peculiarities

¹⁰⁰ Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Ralph Kerr, vol. 8, 3rd ed. (London: B. Herder, 1950), 84–85.

¹⁰¹ Pellegrini, “Deepening Historical and Theological Insights,” 34.

¹⁰² *Ite vos*, 5.

in dress, was a failure from the start. The problem was that the Regular Observance which dominated the reformed Order did not satisfy those friars who sought a life of stricter observance. In their desire to meet the needs of the Church in the 1400s (going back to Cusato's dialectic), the Observants had become domesticated. Other than their renouncing the ownership of property and the use of money, there was not a significant difference between the Regular Observance and the Conventual position. Right from the start, Juan Pascual (d. 1554) who led the small Spanish congregation of Discalced Friars, refused to accept the union and petitioned to keep their former position as a distinctive observance under the Conventual general. The Amadeans also continued in their old position as an autonomous unit under the Conventuals.

More significantly, friars within the Regular Observance continued to seek new ways of reasserting the charism, much like Paoluccio of Trinci had done a century and a half earlier. However, as we have seen, in its attempt to establish a unified observance, *Ite vos* contained a strong prohibition against such new "sects" arising in the Order.¹⁰³ This explains why Matthew of Bascio (d. 1552) and the Tenaglia brothers received such a harsh reaction from their provincial, John of Fano, when they attempted to start a new reform movement in 1525-26 that would become the Capuchin friars. It took the papal bull *Religionis Zelus* of 1528 to legitimize these Friars Minor of the Eremitical Life, placing them under the umbrella of the Conventual friars to protect them. Later in the century, even more congregations of stricter observance—the Reformed, Recollect, and Discalced Franciscans—would gain their own autonomy under the Observants.

Ite vos did fail to meet Leo X's objectives. It did succeed in one thing, however: it permanently divided the Order of Friars Minor. We here today are all brothers, sons of Francis, but are not in the same fraternity. It is ours to seek a way to walk together into a new future.

¹⁰³ *Ite vos*, 7.4.

“May They Grow Holy...” Our Common Franciscan Values

Regis J. Armstrong OFM Cap

*Live a Christian and religious existence without losing oneself
in disputes and chattering.*

Pope Francis encouraged the General Chapter of the Friars Minor in 2016, a message he had informally given to the General Ministers of all three jurisdictions whenever they have met together. Five centuries earlier another pope, Leo X, used another means to promote unity in the fractured First Order of Saint Francis when on 29 May 1517 he issued the strongly worded mandate *Ite vos*. Intended as a decree of union, it became one of division. Five centuries later, in the same year as Christians are marking the division initiated by Martin Luther, Conventual, Capuchin, and Observant Friars Minor are considering what they have called “A Path for Walking Together and Growing in Common Vocation and Franciscan Mission.”

Placing *Ite vos* in its historical context may facilitate looking more objectively to the future; re-examining our common values is far more challenging. Should *re-affirming* of those values be accentuated? That could become platitudinous and anesthetic. Should the focus be simply *realistic*? That might be subjective and become judgmental. Should the approach be *probing*? That might lead to discussion of demographic or economic issues.

Sarah Ruden’s book review of Paula Fredriksen’s *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle* written for *Commonweal* provided this author an ideal lens. After describing the difficulties of placing Fredriksen’s study of Paul into its

proper context, Ruden admitted, “I’m a poet and translator inclined to urge celebration of ... texts for their beauty and inspiration, and to prefer a light touch on whatever seems to invite historical over-parsing on the one hand or superstitious literalism on the other.”¹⁰⁴

Etymologically “translation” comes from the Latin *trans-latio*, the act of taking something from one place or time to another. It is, therefore, the fine art of preserving the character of an original text—sometimes an ancient one—and giving it new life in vibrant contemporary expression. In many ways, the translator walks a tightrope from which he can fall, from one side, into what can become a moribund nostalgia encased in cognates or, from the other, into a labyrinth of distracting synonyms prowling about to find meaning in contemporary idioms. Poetry, meanwhile, is life-giving or has the power to inspire, to cultivate a sensitivity to words or, as Robert Frost describes it, “poetry is a way of taking life by the throat.”¹⁰⁵

One cannot spend all those hours, days, months, and years translating and studying those early documents of our Franciscan tradition without celebrating their beauty and inspiration while, at the same time, recognizing and trying to avoid the historical over-parsing and superstitious literalism of which Ruden writes. Working as a team in such *an* endeavor as *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* demanded sensitivity to our unique Conventual, Observant, and Capuchin traditions, perspectives, and ways of expression.¹⁰⁶ It also demanded of each one of us patience, understanding, appreciation of one another’s gifts, and above all, humor.

From those early documents, two seemingly simple passages from Francis’s writings may be *re-affirming* in the discussions of division that confront us, *realistic* as in recognizing new opportunities for overcoming them, and also, in light of the call to be followers of Francis, *probing* of the integrity with which we today live the Gospel life in our increasingly divided world.

The first is taken from Francis’s *Testament*, a text that has been divisive ever since the thirteenth-century promulgations of Gregory IX’s *Quo*

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Ruden, “Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle,” *Commonweal* 6 (October 2017).

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth S. Sergeant, *Robert Frost: The Trial by Existence* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 402.

¹⁰⁶ FA:ED.

elongati (1230) and Nicholas III's *Exiit qui seminat* (1279).¹⁰⁷ Both papal documents emerged at a time when divisions were growing between the *Zelanti* or Spirituals and the Conventuals or Community: one side embracing the idealism expressed in what Francis called "a remembrance, admonition, exhortation, and my testament;" the other side favoring the interests of the institution by accentuating the nuances between Gospel precept and counsel. The second passage is taken from both versions of the *Letter to the Faithful*.¹⁰⁸ It is a text in which Francis welds together two phrases from the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel: the first from John 17:19, the second from John 17:11. I chose these two passages of Francis's writings because I felt they captured the 1964 call of *Lumen gentium* to "develop and flourish according to the spirit of the founder," echoed a year later in *Perfectae caritatis*, which notes that "the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully acknowledged and maintained."¹⁰⁹ Thus we consider two passages from two different writings of the saint whose heritage we claim: one historically divisive, the other ecumenically challenging.

The Testament 14

The first thirteen verses of Francis's *Testament* consist of a series of four simple, autobiographical statements: "The Lord gave me...", "The Lord led me...", and twice more, "The Lord gave me..." Francis articulates in a very personal way the fundamental values that guided the first generation of brothers who yearned to follow the Gospel life in a radical way: the embrace of a life of penance that began by being led and challenged by lepers, of a life of simple faith in churches and, again, in priests. Those initial four instances culminate in this statement in verse 14: "And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel."¹¹⁰ In that one statement Francis articulated his understanding of what we have most in common: *a brotherhood and a life patterned on the Gospel*. This points to a very interpersonal relationship: the "Most High Himself" Who gives, leads, and reveals and the "I" of Francis. The extremely individual character of this passage is curious: "the Lord gave *me* some brothers, no one showed *me* what *I* had to

¹⁰⁷ See FA:ED I:570-575 and FA:ED III:737-764, respectively.

¹⁰⁸ 1LtF 1:18 and 2LtF 59.

¹⁰⁹ LG 45, and PerCar, no. 2b.

¹¹⁰ FA:ED I:125.

do ... the Most High Himself revealed to *me* that *I* should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.” What was he leaving us as his “last will”? The answer to that question seems unanswerable to this day and may only be answered by Francis’s contrasting uses of “I wish” and “they must” throughout this text.¹¹¹ Francis was, it seems, a man who believed in Paul’s claim that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (II Cor 3:17).

Modern Franciscan interpretations of the *Testament* are undoubtedly influenced by the work of Kajetan Esser, OFM (d. 1978), the first of his many studies of the writings of Saint Francis, which culminated in his critical edition of them. Shortly after World War II, it was translated into all the major languages of the western world except English when it finally saw the light of day in 1982.¹¹² In a series of conferences he later delivered in Rome, Esser spoke of these passages as simply underscoring the saint’s desire for his brothers to cultivate gratitude for the unique role of the Lord in initiating their way of life of poverty and simplicity.¹¹³ In other words, Esser saw the *Testament*’s autobiographical section (Test 1-23) in light of that dramatic confrontation at the Chapter of Mats described in the *Assisi Compilation* when the brothers urged him to adopt the rules of Augustine (d. 430), Benedict (d. 547), or Bernard (d. 1153).¹¹⁴ After it appeared in English translation, however, Esser’s work was simply deemed another work of commentary, swept away in the wave of books and articles of the Franciscan *ressourcement* that introduced English-speaking Franciscans of all three jurisdictions to the primary sources of their tradition.

While working on a series of spiritual conferences on the *Rule* and *Testament* delivered in Rome throughout 1974, Esser wrote a provocative

¹¹¹ Test 6, 8, 11, 12, 20, 27, 28, 29 = FA:ED I:125.

¹¹² Kajetan Esser, *The Testament of Saint Francis: A Commentary*, trans. Madge Karechi, foreword by Serge Wroblewski (Pulaski, WI: Franciscan Publishers, 1982), 5.

¹¹³ Kajetan Esser, *Rule and Testament of St. Francis: Conferences to the Modern Followers of Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977).

¹¹⁴ Anonymous, *Assisi Compilation* 18: “When blessed Francis was at the general chapter called the Chapter of Mats, held at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, there were five thousand brothers present. Many wise and learned brothers told the Lord Cardinal, who later became Pope Gregory, who was present at the chapter, that he should persuade blessed Francis to follow the advice of those same wise brothers and allow himself to be guided by them for the time being. They cited the *Rule* of blessed Benedict, of blessed Augustine, and of blessed Bernard, which teach how to live in such order in such a way.” For a commentary, see Regis J. Armstrong, “*Novellus Pazzus in Mundo*: The Call to Foolishness,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 79 (2009): 469-486.

article for the Capuchins: “The *Testament* of Saint Francis in Capuchin Legislation.”¹¹⁵ The first third of that article traced the acceptance and rejection of the *Testament* amid the tensions and struggles of the two protagonists involved in *Ite vos*: tensions and struggles which began with *Quo elongati* (1230). Throughout the remainder of the article Esser made it a point to remind his Capuchin confreres that the secret of their success could be found in the frequent citations of Francis’s writings, especially the *Testament*, in the first Capuchin Constitutions of 1536, less than twenty years after *Ite vos*.

Shortly after Esser’s death, a number of predominantly lay historians began looking at the *Testament* from different, what they considered more objective perspectives, attempting as best they could to avoid prejudiced interpretations. Many of them wrote significantly not only of its unique place among Francis’s writings, but also its implications for Christian—not simply Franciscan—spirituality. In order to do so, they attempted to sidestep the polemics of poverty, itineracy, authority, and the obligations of the evangelical counsels. Instead, they focused more sharply on a passage which tends to be overlooked, i.e., “to live according to the pattern of the Gospel.”

Among them was the respected Italian historian, Giovanni Miccoli. His 1983 article, “Francis of Assisi’s Christian Proposal” offered the insights of a lay man who marveled at Francis’s genius and at the reasons for his success and that of the first generation of his followers.¹¹⁶ Surprisingly Miccoli devoted only one brief paragraph to Francis’s description of the way of life lived by “those who came to receive life.”¹¹⁷ Instead his research led him to what he saw as “a summary of Francis’s religious experience” and suggested that the first four autobiographical references to the Lord’s actions in his life¹¹⁸ set the stage for the fifth.¹¹⁹ They were, he suggested, “like different stages or particular moments in the

¹¹⁵ Kajetan Esser, “Das Testament des hl. Franziskus in der Gesetzgebung des Kapuziners,” in *Collectanea Franciscana* 44 (1974): 45-69; trans. by Ignatius McCormick as “The Testament of St. Francis in Capuchin Literature,” *Greyfriars Review* 4 (1990): 117-141.

¹¹⁶ Giovanni Miccoli, “La Proposta Cristiana di Francesco d’Assisi,” *Studi Medievali* 24 (1983): 17-76; trans. Edward Hagman as “Francis of Assisi’s Christian Proposal,” *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989): 127-172.

¹¹⁷ Test 15-23 = FA:ED I:125-5.

¹¹⁸ Test 1, 2, 4, 6 = FA:ED I:124.

¹¹⁹ Test 14 = FA:ED I:125.

development of something which would later become a single unified religious proposal.”

Meanwhile, the young Italian scholar Roberto Paciocco wrote an article that built upon the insights of Miccoli, as well as those of Theophile Desbonnet, Grado Giovanni Merlo, Attilio Bartoli Angeli, and others.¹²⁰ Paciocco based his interpretation of “... I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” on the dying Francis’s declaration to his brothers: “I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours!”¹²¹ In this light Paciocco astutely pointed out “how difficult it is to translate ‘live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel’ into institutional or juridical terms.” The focus of these lay historians, therefore, tended to discuss more personal or developmental approaches and not by the observance of the Gospel counsels as seen in *Quo elongati* and *Exiit qui seminat*, but on Francis’s Gospel intuitions.

In 1990 Miccoli re-visited his interpretation in his presentation “A Christian Experience between Gospel and Institution.”¹²² He acknowledged the exegetical studies on Francis’s writing in which attempts had been made to trace the development of a way of life based on the Gospel texts and allusions in those writings. Then he stated provocatively: “Nevertheless, we do not think that this is the best way to proceed, nor do we think that it is sufficient to collect the Scriptural references from which Francis learned to understand the Gospel life.” As he had done in his earlier article, Miccoli took a much broader and dynamic view and reflected again on what he perceived as the two daily sources that continually inspired and shaped Francis’s life: the unfolding mystery of the Incarnation and the self-implicating revelation of God’s embrace of lesser-ness in the liturgy of the Eucharist.¹²³

In this light, it is worthwhile paying attention to Miccoli’s observation about the exegesis of Francis’s writings at the expense of struggling with

¹²⁰ Roberto Paciocco, “Una coscienza tra scelta di vita e fama di santità. Francesco d’Assisi frater e sanctus,” *Hagiographica* I (1994): 207-226; trans. Edward Hagman as “Choice of Life vs. Reputation for Holiness. From Brother Francis to Saint Francis,” *Greyfriars Review* 10:1 (1996): 27-45.

¹²¹ LMj XIV:3 = FA:ED II:642.

¹²² Giovanni Miccoli, “Un’esperienza Cristiana tra Vangelo e istituzione,” *Acts of the XVIII International Congress of Franciscan Studies, Assisi, October 18-20, 1990*; trans. Paul Barrett as “A Christian Experience between Gospel and Institution,” *Greyfriars Review* 11, no. 2 (1997): 113-141.

¹²³ Miccoli, “Francis of Assisi’s Christian Proposal,” 142.

the hermeneutics for understanding them. Raymond Brown made an insightful distinction between exegesis and hermeneutics as that between what the texts once “meant” and what they “mean” today.¹²⁴ In his *Many Roads Lead Eastward: Overtures to Catholic Biblical Theology*, Secular Franciscan and Old Testament professor, Robert D. Miller II, reflected upon Brown’s observation and noted: “...this is not as accurate as seeing it as a “gap” between what was once achieved, intended, or ‘shown,’ and what might be achieved, intended, or ‘shown’ today.”¹²⁵

Curiously, few modern scholars of the *Testament* have reflected in their discussion on this phrase: “the ‘Most High’ himself revealed to me...” In his 1947 analysis, Esser had touched on it in the general sense of God’s communications to Francis. Our post-conciliar theology of revelation, however, raises a question: did Francis understand this to be a call to be attentive to the content or objective meaning of God’s communication? If so, it also raises a challenge: what does it mean to be receptive today to the Lord’s revelation? *Revelavit* [He revealed], literally “He removed a veil,” is a word rarely used by Francis—in fact, only three times: once in the *Office of the Passion’s* direct quotation of Psalm 97:2 (“The Lord has made His salvation known; has revealed his justice in the sight of the nations”),¹²⁶ and twice in this paragraph of the *Testament*.¹²⁷ Only in the context of “the Lord’s gift of brothers,” however, do the implications of “the ‘Most High’ himself revealed /removed the veil for me” become clearer. Three mysteries are implied in this unveiling: the “Most High,” the brother, and the ways of dealing with both. For example, what is the mystery behind did the Lord give *this* brother to me? Or, the mystery behind what is God trying to teach me through this brother’s strengths or weaknesses? Or, the mystery behind how I might discover the Gospel pattern God wants me to follow right now? While the word appears infrequently in Francis’s writings, its presence in this consideration of brotherhood and the pattern of Gospel life suggests we might profit from reflecting on the dynamic of revelation in our daily life.

¹²⁴ Raymond Brown, *The Critical Meaning of the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 23-44. I am grateful to Robert D. Miller II for pointing this out to me.

¹²⁵ Robert D. Miller II, *Many Roads Lead Eastward* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 30ff. While building upon Brown’s distinction, Miller was also referring to the work of Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), and David H. Kelsey, “Theological Use of Scripture in Process Hermeneutics,” *Process Studies* 13 (1983): 181-188.

¹²⁶ *Office of the Passion*, Matins of Easter Sunday, Psalm [IX]: 3 (Ps 98:2) = FA:ED I:149.

¹²⁷ Test 14 = FA:ED I:125.

Anyone familiar with the early academic career of Joseph Ratzinger (b. 1927) will recall his struggle defending Bonaventure's theology of revelation in his habilitation. In what was published as *The Theology of History of Saint Bonaventure*—minus its first controversial chapter—the young academic pointed out that at the time of his doctoral defense, Bonaventure's concept of revelation was not immediately comparable with similar concepts in modern theology.¹²⁸ Ratzinger went on to describe a more dynamic concept of revelation as “the mystery hidden in Scripture and, therefore ...effecting a pneumatic understanding of Scripture.” From that perspective, he considered revelation as referring to “that imageless unveiling of the divine reality in the mystical ascent.”¹²⁹ The importance of Ratzinger's early academic struggle became evident in the first chapter of Vatican II's *Dei verbum in whose composition* he played a significant role. One sentence, in particular, suggests for the purposes of this presentation the influence of Bonaventure's theology of the role of Spirit in the study of Scripture: “The same holy Spirit constantly perfects faith by his gifts, so that revelation may be more and more deeply understood.”¹³⁰ It became even more significant in *Verbum Domini*, the post-synodal exhortation “On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,” in which as Benedict speaks of “revelation” seventy-four times.¹³¹

It is difficult to reflect on the theology of revelation today without consulting René Latourelle's (d. 2017) *Theology of Revelation* or two works of his renowned student, Avery Dulles (d. 2008), *Revelation Theology* and *Models of Revelation*.¹³² In his consideration of hermeneutical models, Miller reviewed Dulles's five models of revelation and re-labeled them through five English words, each beginning with the letter “E”: Encounter, Event, Experience, Expression, and Expectation.¹³³ Miller's lens is helpful for re-examining concerning what the Most High revealed to Francis in the context of his brothers: the pattern of the holy Gospel. Francis “encountered” the word (Dulles's “doctrinal model” of revelation) in the “event” which took place in either the church of San Nicolo

¹²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 59.

¹²⁹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 59.

¹³⁰ DV 5.

¹³¹ E.g., 6 times alone in VD 3.

¹³² René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation* (New York, NY: Alba House, 1966); Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology: A History* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); idem, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1985).

¹³³ Miller, *Many Roads Lead Eastward*, 32ff.

or that of the Portiuncula (Dulles's "historical model"). This moment of the discovery of God's word in this place was an unforgettable "experience" of divine communication (Dulles's "inner experiential model"), one that made an impact, an "expression" to others as in "the Lord revealed to me" (Dulles's "dialectical model"), and led to an "expectation," the words on his death-bed, "may He do the same for you" (Dulles's fifth "new awareness model").

There is wisdom in Miccoli's singling out Francis's daily encounter with the Incarnation and the Eucharist. From the Incarnation, he discovered how the Word-made-Flesh lived among his brothers and sisters; from the Eucharist, he experienced anew, each day how the Word chooses to come among us. An exegesis of Francis's writings may best offer us the hermeneutical tripod of prayer, penance, and poverty upon which to rest our lens for focusing on the pattern of the holy Gospel in the context of daily life with our brothers. From this perspective, what may divide our common heritage most, then, is not our exegesis of Francis's writings about that Gospel life, but the hermeneutics through which we can discover what that means today.¹³⁴

In different settings, however, both Esser and Miccoli pointed to the *Admonitions* for an understanding of the implications of the pattern of the Gospel that must be lived, but from different perspectives: Esser from the more spiritual, Miccoli from the more historical. What both men neglected, however, was to accentuate the life-giving activity of the Spirit who is clearly present in Francis's *First Admonition* as the Spirit who enables us to have an access to and a vision of the "inaccessible" God,¹³⁵ and, in the *Seventh Admonition* the "Spirit of the divine letter"¹³⁶ who gives us life and teaches us how to live it. While so much of our common Franciscan history has been marred by the polemics of the contents of the gospel pattern, i.e., poverty, authority, expressions of brotherhood, etc., might it not be worthwhile for us to reflect more on the spiritual dynamic—which we actually share in common—as we, like Francis,

¹³⁴ Without realizing it I may have attempted to do this in my article "Francis of Assisi and the Prism of Theology," *Collectanea Franciscana* 65 (1995): 83-113. While not using Brown's terminology I described Francis as leaving us a unique tripod of penance, prayer, and poverty on which the Franciscan hermeneutic rests.

¹³⁵ Adm 1, 5 = FA:ED I:128.

¹³⁶ Adm 7, 3 = FA:ED I:132.

struggle to unveil the mysteries of our lives.¹³⁷ The *Rule's* single-minded, clarion call in this dysfunctional world needs to be heard more than ever: "...let them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity."¹³⁸

The First Letter to the Faithful 18

This leads me to the second passage from Francis's writings and a further reflection of our common values. In light of the strident tones of *Ite vos*, the curious welding of two Johannine phrases in Francis's writings is striking: "*that they might be sanctified in being one* (Jn 17:19) *as we are one* (Jn 17:11)."¹³⁹ The originality in bringing these two phrases together seems a natural segue to our discussion of life "according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel."¹⁴⁰ Was this a scribal error, one corrected in the twenty-second chapter of the Earlier Rule?¹⁴¹ Or was it a fortuitous slip of his memory? Or was it a Spirit-filled insight into his Gospel intuitions and an expression of his fundamental Gospel wish for his followers?

Much has been written of Francis's penchant for the Gospel of John and, in particular, its seventeenth chapter. The twenty-second chapter of the *Earlier Rule* and both *exhortations to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*¹⁴² contain lengthy citations from it. Some have argued that Francis appropriates the words of Jesus in order to bring his own prayer to life according to the pattern of the holy Gospel. In fact, that Gospel pattern is clearly present as a dynamic principle for all his followers. In all three writings,¹⁴³ *three patterns of relationships* are discernible: 1) the Father and the Son, 2) the Son and those whom the Father has given him, and 3) those given to the Son and those who, through them, have come to believe. *The call to grow in holiness* is also discernible as it permeates all three patterns of these relationships beginning with the Father who is addressed as "holy," the Son who speaks of his own call to be holy, that of those given to Him, and that of those through whom others come to

¹³⁷ A most helpful article in this regard is that of Piet Fransen, "Divine Revelation: Source of Man's Faith," in *Faith: Its Name and Meaning*, Papers of the Maynooth Union Summer School, ed. Paul Surlis (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Limited, 1970), 18-52.

¹³⁸ LR X, 8 = FA:ED I:105.

¹³⁹ 1LtF 18 = FA:ED I:42.

¹⁴⁰ See note 61, above.

¹⁴¹ ER XXII, 45 = FA:ED I:81.

¹⁴² 1LtF and 2LtF.

¹⁴³ ER, 1LtF and 2LtF.

believe. Discernible in the pattern of each set of relationships is the call “*in being one as we are one*,”¹⁴⁴ a call founded on the revelation of the Triune God.

The *Earlier Exhortation's* version of the welding of these Gospel passages offers the clearest expression of this pattern of the holy Gospel. It is the most succinct and straightforward version and, it may be argued, forms the foundation for the other citations. After reminding his readers of the wonder of having such a brother who is also such a son, Francis summarizes his understanding of his Gospel life. The generosity of the Father to the Son is immediately obvious in the gifts of followers and of words, as is the generosity of the Son to his followers in gifting his own followers with the words He has received. Then this prayer: “*I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word* (Jn 17:20), that they might be sanctified in being one (Jn 17:19) *as we are [one]* (Jn 17:11).”¹⁴⁵ While these passages are expressed in terms of the Father and the Son, the Spirit's presence remains inconspicuous unless attention is given to John's theology of the word as spirit and life and the evangelist's repeated mention of “word” and “words,” that is, the words the Father gives to Son, that Jesus then gives to those who have been given to Him, and that they in turn give them to those to whom they are sent.¹⁴⁶ Why? “That they might be sanctified in being one *as we are [one]*.”

A Final Thought

Over the years I have found helpful Bernard of Clairvaux's encouragement of his monks to absorb the meaning of an ancient sacred text, the *Song of Songs*, by reading “the book of our own experience.”¹⁴⁷ Working on *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, the book of experience began teaching this student of Franciscan life more about our common Franciscan values than the text themselves. The frequent meetings Wayne

¹⁴⁴ See note 138, above.

¹⁴⁵ 1LtF 18 = FA:ED I:42.

¹⁴⁶ Enter the role of preachers and theologians who, in the words of the *Testament*, “minister the most holy divine words and respect them as those who minister to us spirit and life.” Test. 13 = FA:ED I:125.

¹⁴⁷ “*In libro experientiae*,” Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs* 3.1, in *S. Bernardi Opera*, 8 vols., ed. Jean Leclercq et al. (Rome: Editiones Cisterciensis, 1957-1977), here 1.14.7. On the theme of paying attention to experience in Bernard's writings, see Kilian McDonnell, “Spirit and Experience in Bernard of Clairvaux,” *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 3-18.

Hellmann, Bill Short, and myself would take us from one jurisdiction to another: from Berkeley, California, to Saint Louis, Missouri, to Interlaken, New York, that is, from the friary of the Friars Minor of the Saint Barbara Province in Berkeley, to the that of the Conventuals of Our Lady of Consolation Province in Saint Louis, and to that of the Capuchins of the Province of Saint Mary in Interlaken. In addition to taking advantage of room and board, we prayed with our brothers, entered freely into their banter, and absorbed the wisdom which they offhandedly and freely imparted to us. Throughout those years we developed lasting friendships rooted in our common life. After knocking over a Christmas tree meticulously decorated by a Capuchin in a residence of the Friars Minor, setting off fire alarms in a Conventual Provincialate and freezing its internet connection—all this while repeatedly eating and drinking out of house and home all three of our jurisdictions—we marveled that we continued to be welcomed back and always with enthusiasm for and interest in our work. As a result, what the texts were teaching us about our common Franciscan values was being verified by our experiences. If, as Pope Francis maintains, “The charism is not to be conserved like a bottle of distilled water, but must instead be made to bear fruit, with courage, placed at the service of current reality, of cultures, of history ...”¹⁴⁸ we must continue to ask ourselves how are we preparing our younger brother to stand on the shoulders of the giants from whom we learned how to drink living water and to look forward by looking backward. Our common Franciscan values are best expressed in our awareness of the spirit of the founder, as the spirit of *Lumen gentium* and *Perfectae caritatis* encouraged us. Our common Franciscan values? I would like to suggest that the book of experience has taught the three of us that this translation enterprise—more than the three volumes themselves—may prove that we do indeed have much in common. May that book of experience offer encouragement and inspiration for those young brothers who come after us.

¹⁴⁸ Francis, Address to the National Assembly of the Italian Conference of Major Superiors, 7 November 2014, <http://www.csr.news/oldnews-en/?p=280>.

Collaboration among Franciscans Today

Jude Winkler OFM Conv

I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in this workshop. My presentation will be a little different from the others. First, I am not a Franciscan scholar. My background is Sacred Scripture, which I suppose we could call proto-Franciscana. The other reality is that although I was trained in academics, my role right now is administration—serving with the Conventual Curia in Rome. I would like to present some of the many ways that Franciscans are now collaborating throughout the world, and challenge us to think in creative ways about how we could organize new forms of collaboration for the future, always keeping in mind the phrase that Bill Short OFM used often during his study day sponsored by the Duns Scotus chair during the Spring of 2018: unity in diversity.

I am old enough and have been with the friars long enough to recognize what a miracle this type of gathering is. When I was in formation in Rome, one of my professors told us of how in past centuries the Conventual friars would have to leave friaries out the back door singing the *De Profundis* while the Friars Minor would enter the front door singing the *Te Deum*. Not only was the professor caught up in things that happened centuries ago, but he was also perpetuating propaganda that was damaging because it was scandalizing the little ones of Luke's Gospel (18:15-17). Furthermore, my professor's words were betraying our identity. We call ourselves friars minor. The mutual antagonism among the Orders was a betrayal of the concept of our identity as friars, as brothers of all around us, even to the point of being brothers of all of creation. It was also a betrayal of our identity as minors, for we often prided ourselves on the fact that we were not like the others, not all that dissimilar to the

Pharisee who vaunted himself for the fact that he was not like the publican (Lk 18:11).

Hopefully, those times are over, and I can bear witness to the fact that there are good signs throughout the world that they are at least coming to an end. Why is this new era dawning?

Let's be honest. As with any major phenomenon, there are a series of motivations for the change in climate in how we friars of the First Order treat each other.

Part of the reason is demographics. Our Orders have all suffered from a fall in vocations, especially in the First World. I sometimes compare the Order to individual friars. We weigh the same as when we entered, but it has all gone south. Likewise, our Orders are flourishing in the Third World but suffering and at times dying in the First World. This has a double impact. First of all, the numbers are falling in the older jurisdictions where the difficult history of inter-order relations is felt the strongest, and secondly, the numbers are growing in the very areas where the difficulties of the past have the least impact. Both of these things help to weaken the tendency to see the other families as the enemy.

The fall in numbers in the First World means that if we want to continue our valuable work in certain fields of endeavor, then we must work together. The way that we work together might mean a certain migration of friars from areas where there are more vocations to those areas where there are fewer, as long as this does not become a form of neo-colonialism. It might also mean working together among the members of the First Order.

What has been said about the numbers of the friars can also be applied to finances. Given the financial situation of our various families, and the enormous cost of providing for a good formation and education for friars in areas of the world which are not autonomous financially, we realize that we cannot go it alone. This is one way that God is allowing us to taste the bitter-sweet flavor of poverty once again. This can be a great motivation to a more faithful stewardship of the resources that all of us have received.

Then we have the advances in Franciscan scholarship. In the Spring of 2018 Bill Short OFM offered the biennial study day sponsored by the Duns Scotus chair at Catholic Theological Union on various topics that related to *Ite vos*. He spoke of the inter-order collaboration in the publication of the Franciscan sources. The more we delve into those sources, the more we realize that the hurtful divisions that we have endured for too long are not from the Spirit. St. Paul reminds us that the Spirit is a Spirit of peace and not of division (Gal 5:22-23). Too often our communities sounded like the Corinthians in the early chapters of First Corinthians—I am for Paul, I am for Apollos, I am for Christ (1 Cor 3:4). I am for Elias, I am for Leo, I am for Matteo.

In recent years, all religious communities have been challenged by post-conciliar documents on religious life to give witness to the value of fraternity. Our first and possibly most important apostolate is to live as brothers. In a world fragmented by divisions and walls, Pope Francis calls us to build bridges.¹⁴⁹ Think of the sign value of members of the families of the First Order working and living together as brothers.

This sign value also has cosmic consequences. There is a Jewish concept called *Tikkun Olam*. The world has been wounded by sin, and each good act that we perform heals in some small way the wounds that our sins have caused. When a Friar Minor, a Capuchin, and a Conventual collaborate and live in a fraternity of profound respect, the world is transformed. Having said all of this, what are some of the ways in which we are working together? Realize that some of these initiatives will come from the top down, while others are taking place at the grassroots level. Some involve only friars of the First Order, while others extend to our sisters of the Second Order, our brothers and sisters of the Third Order, and our brothers and sisters of what we are today calling the Fourth Order. This list is not exhaustive, but it gives examples from various sorts of collaboration.

¹⁴⁹ This is a common theme in Francis's teaching, recently reiterated in March of 2019 after visiting Morocco. See Gerard O'Connell, "Pope Francis: 'Build Bridges, Not Walls,'" *America* (31 March 2019), <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/03/31/pope-francis-build-bridges-not-walls>.

Collaboration among the Curias

Let's start with the ministry of leadership that is exercised in Rome. I am starting there not because this is where this movement began, but it just gives us a good starting point. The ministers general meet often, almost every month, to plan joint initiatives. A couple of times a year they meet with the larger group of Franciscan leadership. The vicars of the First Order also meet almost every month. The ministers general have issued a number of letters to all the friars of the First Order over the years, and they have joined forces to seek recourse to the Holy See for various issues. One example of this is the question of whether religious brothers can be major superiors in the Order. As you know, Canon Law recognizes two forms of male religious life: Priestly communities and Brother communities. For many years, the ministers have sought a third category: that of mixed communities. It is clear that in the present atmosphere at the Vatican, canon law is not going to be changed. Therefore, the ministers sought a *grazia* from Pope Francis to allow Mendicants to act as mixed communities. A *grazia* is a favor given to the communities and it is valid as long as it is not revoked. We have not yet received a response from the Vatican, but we are hoping that maybe when the friars meet with the Pope on November 23, 2018, there might be some sort of answer.

The definitories have also set up a schedule to gather for picnics or other events at least twice a year at each of the curias. This might sound innocuous, but I am a firm believer that more good is done over a picnic table than in a conference room. We are breaking down preconceptions and prejudices.

A major initiative at this level is also what is happening with the Franciscan University in Rome. The official date for the inauguration of this university is Easter of 2018. Realistically, the actual opening of the new university, after all the permissions have been received from the government and the Congregation, is either the Fall of 2019 or 2020. Nevertheless, it is moving ahead. All three ministers general are firm on this, and they are ensuring that whatever opposition that arises is overcome. At its initial stages, there will be two campuses: one at the Antonianum and one at the Seraphicum. The Seraphicum will be the site for undergraduate studies in philosophy and theology, while the Antonianum will be the site for licentiate and doctoral studies. There will be four faculties:

biblical sciences, philosophy, theology, and canon law with the Institute of Franciscan Spirituality. One of the critical issues that still needs work is finances, and up to this point the academics in the various commissions have not been able to handle that issue very well. It has been agreed that both of the present faculties will be suppressed and a new entity established, similar to what happens when two jurisdictions of the same order are united.

Working Together for a Particular Purpose

One especially successful area of collaboration among the Orders is the joint school for missionaries in Brussels, Belgium. This program is housed in a friary of the Friars Minor, and it offers two programs in missionary preparation a year: in the fall there is a two- to three-month program in English and in the Spring there is another program in French. There has been some talk of possibly moving the program to Palestrina in Italy, but this is still at the talk level.

Justice and Peace Collaboration

Justice and Peace work is in the DNA of the friars, but at times one has to wonder if the friars have allowed it to become a recessive gene. Friars tend to get busy in their apostolates, and they can, at times, be negligent in addressing the justice and peace issues at home and abroad. That is why the success of the collaboration of the families of the First Order and the entire Franciscan family in justice, peace, and the safeguarding of creation is so important.

Over thirty years ago, a Friar Minor from Malta and a couple of Franciscan Sisters from the States proposed a Franciscan presence at the UN. These initiatives evolved into Franciscans International or FI, which today has offices in Geneva and New York. They are sponsored by the generals of many Franciscan families: Friars Minor, Capuchin, Conventual, Third Order Regular, International Franciscan Conference, Secular Franciscan Order, and the Anglican Franciscans. They work on human rights issues, serving as an NGO that can make interventions during various conferences and hearings. One of the moments in which they can intervene the most is during the four-year evaluation of human rights issues in each country of the UN. If a country has not mentioned a particular issue that the Franciscans in that area have flagged, the ad-

vocacy team of FI can issue comments on it at a public hearing, which often leads to a negotiation between the offending country and FI. One example of the work FI has done is that it was instrumental in getting extreme poverty classified as a form of human rights violation.

What FI does at an international level, the Franciscan Action Network does in the United States. They lobby at various levels of government concerning human rights and environmental issues. They also work extensively to educate the friars themselves about these issues.

In Rome, we have the representatives from various Franciscan families working together as the “Roman VI” Inter-Franciscan Commission. Furthermore, there is serious discussion in Rome about whether there should be one office for the friars working for justice and peace, and possibly another for those working together for ecumenical and inter-faith dialog.

Some of the justice and peace initiatives that have been started by a particular family of the First Order have then spread out to involve other friars. A good example of this is the Capuchin program called the Dami-etta Peace Initiative in Africa. Remember, Damietta is where Francis met the Sultan, and this initiative seeks to bring together various antagonistic groups into dialogue. In South Africa, this is locals and refugees from other parts of Africa; in Kenya, it is feuding tribes; in Nigeria, it is Christians and Muslims.

Initial and Continuing Formation

Two areas of increasing collaboration are initial and continuing formation. A highlight in collaboration in initial formation is the inter-order collaboration seen in our joint seminary in Lusaka, Zambia. This particular program involves friars of the three families living in separate residences with separate programs but studying in a common faculty. Obviously, there is also collaboration on workshops and joint presentations.

What has recently happened in California is another example of a drift toward collaboration. In the fall of 2017, the Friars Minor moved their national novitiate to Santa Barbara, which means that all three national novitiates of the First Order are in California, with the Capuchins in

Sant Inez and the Conventuals in Arroyo Grande. The directors of the three programs are already in dialogue about how they might offer joint programs, and we can foresee collaboration with spiritual directors, workshops, etc. Possibly most important, now that all three families are near each other, we might finally have enough talent to beat the diocesan seminarians at Camarillo in soccer.

There are also numerous sites where the friars either study together in one of our faculties—as in Cracow where the Conventuals and Capuchins study theology together, and all three orders studying together in the seminary run by the Friars Minor in Vietnam—or we study together in a faculty run by someone else, such as San Antonio.

Continuing formation offers many possibilities for collaboration. Again, part of the motivating factors is demographics. It is easier to hold solemn vow retreats, guardians' workshops, retreats, etc. when there is a critical mass of friars; on the other hand, there is a value in doing these things together simply for the fact of being together. Talking with friars throughout the world, I have heard of joint solemn vow retreat programs in the United States and Slovenia, joint guardians' workshops in Argentina and Brazil, joint initiatives in Korea and Germany.

Special Events

Over these years, many of our Franciscan feasts have offered the possibility for common celebrations. There is the Transitus on October 3. I remember being at Oceanside a couple of years ago when all the families were well represented. There is the feast of the Portiuncula on August 2 and the feast of St. Clare on August 11. There are also the many Chapters of Mats and pilgrimages that are held throughout the world in these days.

Then there are other special events that present possibilities for collaboration. One of them is the ecumenical gathering called the Spirit of Assisi. This gathering for inter-religious dialog and prayer was begun by St. John Paul II in 1986 in Assisi and continues under the sponsorship of the *Comunità di Sant'Egidio*. This lay-run organization from Rome was founded in 1968 as a Catholic response to all the confusion of that year of rebellion throughout much of the First World. While the Spirit

of Assisi gathering is held in different sites all over the world, it returned to Assisi in 2016.

There is the Franciscan Day offered at all the recent World Youth Days. Rather than having individual gatherings for the hundreds of youth sponsored by the various Franciscan families, there is one common gathering to celebrate our unity in diversity.

The very event that we are commemorating today has offered us a great opportunity for collaboration. The most significant center for this initiative has been Umbria. The birthplace of our Orders has not always been a center of inter-order dialog. I remember as a student hearing that the Conventuals in Assisi would brag that we had the body while the Friars Minor at the Portiuncula would respond that they had the spirit. However, these past years the friars throughout Umbria have committed themselves to a multi-year program of dialog. The topics in this dialog were: “Remembering” in 2015; “Reconciliation” (especially for the anniversary of the Portiuncula Indulgence) in 2016; “Fraternity” in 2017, with a celebration of a type of chapter of mats and a pilgrimage to Rome on November 23. In 2018 it is evangelization, so that our commemoration of this event not be centered upon introspection but lead us to proclaim the dawning of the Kingdom.

The Secular Franciscan Order (OFS)

We should not forget the tremendous work that our sisters and brothers of OFS have done for us in reorganizing their presences so that they are no longer under the jurisdiction of any of our individual families. We have assumed the rightful place of being spiritual assistants and not the leaders of their Order. Admittedly, this reorganization has gone better in some places and not so well in others. Ironically and sadly, it was often the friars who placed the largest barriers to the breaking down the walls.

Franciscan Intellectual Tradition

Another very hopeful movement in recent years is the fostering of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. As we have fewer and fewer academic institutions under our direct guidance, it has been important to foster friars and sisters in this tradition so that we will not lose an important part of our heritage, something which we have an obligation to share

with the world. As time has gone by, though, this movement has reached out to people whom we sometimes call members of the Fourth Order. They are not Franciscans by profession, but their spirits are thoroughly within our tradition. I must recognize Wayne Hellman as one friar who has been instrumental in fostering Franciscan Studies at a graduate level among his lay students.

I have already mentioned the collaboration that we saw in the production of the Franciscan Sources books.

Living Together

In the past few years, we have begun some experiments in establishing joint houses. This month, November 2017, we are opening a project in Jerusalem, actually in one of the towns that claims to be Emmaus, where Friars Minor and Conventuals will live together. The Capuchins are not joining this project yet due to some difficulties they have had with their own house in Jerusalem, but we hope that they too will soon be part of this project. At present there are two Friars Minor from outside the Holy Land Custody, one Holy Land Custody friar, and two Conventuals there. They will spend this year discussing their joint project, and then we will see where it will go.

There are two other projects in active research. One is an invitation from Cardinal O'Malley of Boston to open a joint friary in his archdiocese. The other is to open a friary in Rieti, Italy. There the difficulty has been to convince the bishop of Rieti that we do not want to accept so many parishes in his diocese served by the one friary, an obligation that would destroy the tenor of life we want to live there.

There are obvious canon law issues with establishing a joint friary. The Conventual Minister General has a saying that we will make the decisions, and then we will find a canon lawyer to prove that what we are doing is OK. And if the canon lawyer does not agree with us, we will find another canon lawyer.

Possibilities for the Future

When Bill Short OFM gave his workshop in the Spring of 2017 here at Catholic Theological Union, he used the phrase unity in diversity. I don't see the three Orders joining together any time soon. Let's face it,

it is difficult enough for provinces to unite within the same family of the First Order. We still have too much provincialism in every sense of the word. We still get caught up in our little worlds and have too little energy to dream and risk. We fall into the trap mentioned by Flannery O'Connor, that we “vigorously resist grace, because grace changes us and the change is painful.”¹⁵⁰

However, we have to continue to do things that will move us forward, wherever that forward will lead us. Why can't we set up a joint commission to talk about establishing presences of friars in joint communities in areas of the country or in other countries where the friars don't yet exist. In this country, I am thinking especially of areas around Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver. Why can't we set up joint experimental houses for friars who are called to an eremitical lifestyle, or who are artists, or who want to live a very simple lifestyle? Why do we as orders have to duplicate initiatives and reinvent the wheel when it would be more logical to work together?

¹⁵⁰ Flannery O'Connor, *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Vintage, 1980), 307.

Part II

Introduction: “Lifelong Formation for Franciscan Men in the U.S. in Service of God’s Mission” (25-27 October 2018)

For three days forty-plus Franciscan brothers assisted by two OSF sisters gathered for a symposium on lifelong formation for Franciscan men at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. The gathering was sponsored by the Duns Scotus Chair in Spirituality at CTU. Over the past two decades the chair, endowed by the St. John the Baptist Province of OFM friars in 1997, has sponsored scholarship and educational initiatives in support of the Franciscan charism. These efforts have included lectures by renowned scholars such as Sr. Ilia Delia OSF of Villanova University, and study days by leading Franciscan thinkers such as Bill Short OFM of the Franciscan School of Theology.

This first-of-its-kind symposium was designed to expand the conversation by inviting first and third order brothers from a variety of communities and jurisdictions to ponder the promise and demands of forming Franciscan men for the twenty-first century. Participants included Atonement Friars, Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn, TORs, OFM, OFM

Conventual, and OFM Capuchin friars from across the United States and some brothers from Europe. Invitations had been extended to multiple other communities as well.

In 1217 the Franciscan order was officially divided into two separate families by Pope Leo X in his proclamation *Ite vos*.¹⁵¹ In recent years there have been various “Beyond *Ite vos*” efforts from the international to local levels to move beyond the long standing divisions within the Franciscan family and build avenues of communication and collaboration.¹⁵² As Edward Foley, the current Duns Scotus Professor of Spirituality, explained, the advisory board for the Duns Scotus Chair—composed of OFM, OFM Conventual, OFM Capuchin, and OSF representatives—recognized that this first symposium could not address the needs of every group. It was thus decided that it would be appropriate to focus on the formation of Franciscan men so that they could develop a more united presence and provide leadership around the vision for the Franciscan family in the future. As previous events sponsored by this chair have invited the presence of Franciscan Sisters and Secular Franciscans, so any future symposia would also expand to include these important members of the Franciscan family.

The symposium was structured around a series of presentations, two of which were open to the public. Michael Perry OFM, the current minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, offered an opening lecture on Thursday evening entitled “*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased: Musings from the Margins.*” Taking his cue from the Gospel of Mark (1:9-15), Br. Michael explored that text as one that presents necessary elements for the lifelong journey of religious life and discipleship. His presentation, livestreamed on CTU Facebook, and soon to be posted on the CTU website, was attended by a large group of Franciscans, including men in initial formation from the OFM, Conventual, and Capuchin communities. The following day, three participants in the symposium offered responses to Br. Michael’s presentation, which spurred the morning discussion.

A second presentation was offered on Friday morning by Sister Margaret Guider OSF, Associate Professor of Missiology and Chair of the Ecclesiastical Faculty at Boston College’s School of Theology and Ministry,

¹⁵¹ See the fresh translation of this text included earlier in this volume.

¹⁵² See the overview of these efforts provided by Jude Winkler OFM Conv., above.

and member of the Duns Scotus advisory board. In her “Stewarding the Grace of Fraternity: Living out the Franciscan Charism of ‘Being Brothers’ in Service of God’s Mission” Sr. Margaret reminded the group that it was only after the Lord gave Francis brothers that the Poverello focused on the Gospel form of life. Then, employing Matthew’s parable of the talents (25:14-30) she invited the brothers to consider what kind of stewards of the grace of *fraternitas* have we, are we, and will we become. These challenges were the focus of discussion for the rest of the morning.

On Friday afternoon Dan Horan OFM, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at CTU, offered a presentation on “Liquidity and the Abyss: Lifelong Theological Formation for U.S. Franciscans.” Br. Dan focused on contemporary theological trends, challenges, and hopes that need attention in forming Franciscan men today. In this “liquid” era in which there are powerful forces attempting the decolonialization of standards of knowing and experience, Br. Dan proposed that two theological areas that need attention by Franciscans are a theology of authenticity and the meaning of the human person. Small group discussion and interaction with the presenter occupied the participants for this first afternoon session.

The final session on Friday afternoon was designed as a grassroots moment in which participants were asked to brainstorm about what issues were not being addressed and needed to be raised, as well as what issues or ideas really resonated with them and needed to be remembered. This discussion, like the whole of the symposium, was facilitated by Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF. The former director of the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University, and then President of that University, Sr. Margaret brought not only formidable facilitation skills but also a vast knowledge of Franciscan theology and spirituality to the task. Her ability to weave Franciscan sources, stories, and poetry into the process contributed to the forward momentum of the symposium and the lively engagement of its participants. This grassroots session yielded affirmations and particularly unaddressed issues that covered seven large post-it sheets. Pat McCloskey OFM, editor of *St. Anthony Messenger* magazine, volunteered to serve as secretary for the symposium and assisted Sr. Margaret in compiling and recording these comments.

Friday evening was the second public presentation, this time by John Corriveau OFM Cap., former minister general of the Capuchin Order

and recently retired bishop of Nelson, British Columbia. His topic was “A Brotherhood of Missionary Disciples.” In his presentation Br. John noted that in a unique turn Francis chose to model his form of religious life on the life of Jesus’s missionary disciples. From this flowed his two main points: 1) the embrace of Franciscan brotherhood is the embrace of Jesus Christ, and 2) that embrace leads to Franciscan brotherhood. Br. John’s impassioned presentation was again attended by a large group of friars, including many brothers in initial formation from the various Franciscan communities in and around Chicago. The presentation was videotaped and will be available on the CTU website. On Saturday morning, three symposium participants responded to Br. John’s talk, which sparked the morning conversation in the symposium. In final session of the symposium, facilitator Sr. Margaret asked the group to consider “What is your new *mandatum* after this symposium” and “What is our mutual *mandatum* from this symposium?” The participants offered many suggestions for what they and their individual obediences could do in light of this gathering, as well as suggestions for further work of the Duns Scotus Chair.

As part of the environment for the symposium Jerry Bleem OFM, director of formation for the OFM interprovincial temporary professed program in Chicago and an adjunct Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, coordinated a juried art show entitled “Prayer and Devotion: Franciscan Art, Franciscan Artists.” This unique installation, on display at the Veeck Art Gallery at CTU from September 16 through December 15 of 2018, featured over twenty-five works in glass, textiles, paint, and other media. Symbolic of the Franciscan tradition of embracing beauty as a central theological theme, these beautiful works provided the setting for fellowship among the symposium participants whose meals were served in the gallery. Similar attention was given to the prayer environment that included celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours punctuated by music, texts, and prayers in nine different languages, reflecting the diverse heritages and ministry experiences of the symposium participants.

"You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased"

Musings from the Margins

Michael A. Perry OFM

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." (Mk 1:9-15)

Good evening to you my dear Conventual, Capuchin, Third Order Regular, Atonement and OFM brothers, Brothers of the Renewal, Secular Franciscans, Franciscans of the Anglican Communion, and to all others who are present. Whenever St. Francis of Assisi would greet a group of people, especially while engaging in popular preaching, he would call for the peace of God to descend upon them. Perhaps this was something he learned during his brief visit to Egypt 800 years ago, staying for a time in the camp of the Muslim military leader al-Malik al-Kamil. I hope that this same peace might descend upon all who are participating in this symposium.

It is a great joy for me to be here with you in and to participate in this symposium dealing with the question, “What does it mean for us Franciscans in general, and those of us who share an identical rule and charismatic origin, and indeed for all who have embraced consecrated life and the public profession of the evangelical vows to be engaged in a lifelong process of conversion?” Perhaps the more difficult question we must face is, “What forces from the heavens will be required for of us *to be convinced* that the journey upon which we have embarked is lifelong?”

Mark 1:9-15: Jesus’s Lifelong Vocational Journey of Conversion

I begin by reflecting on chapter 1 of the Gospel of Mark, which deals with the initial moments in the life of Jesus where he moves from a private life in and around Nazareth, to a public life that would eventually lead him to Jerusalem, the center of religious and political power, and to his death. I believe Mark’s text offers some clues about the nature of our religious profession and presents us with elements necessary for the lifelong journey upon which those of us who are religious have embarked. However, I also believe this applies equally to all disciples, as Pope Francis has made clear in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*.

In the opening lines of the text, Jesus goes from Nazareth to the Jordan River where his cousin John is conducting some form of ritual purification: an initiation into a new form of life involving a personal conversion and entry into some new type of community. Jesus goes out in search of John. Can we speak of Jesus feeling the pull of the Spirit, a desire to understand more fully the purpose of his life and his future?

No matter what response we give to this question, what we can affirm in Mark’s understanding of conversion is that it always has a social or public dimension and is not simply a private or individual matter. Through baptism into the way of Jesus, one receives a new identity of choosing to place God at the center of one’s life, which must be deepened and developed over a lifetime of decision-making. Discipleship in the community of Mark is about embracing the gift of the calling Jesus offers to each and every person. It also is about undertaking this new way of life that one has received as gift: a gift that is understood as it is lived in a community of others who also have received the same gift and together lived with the Rabbi Jesus, who accompanies and helps to explain the significance of the gift.

Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark is experienced as an unfolding of the mystery of God over the course of a lifelong process, with Jesus as the first and model disciple. This unfolding takes place most powerfully in the constancy of exchanges: of praying, eating and drinking, and walking alongside the Master, who shares his life with his disciples, teaching them to follow his example.

A Franciscan Reflection

Stepping out of the biblical text for a moment, I find some key elements in what we have seen in this first part of the text of Mark's gospel also present in the spiritual intuition and life practice of our founder, St. Francis of Assisi. Francis's own calling begins with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. General Secretary for Formation and Studies for the Order of Friars Minor, Bro. Cesare Vaiani argues that for Francis, God is experienced as the "first author of our formation and guide of our evangelization."¹⁵³

After only one year, Francis and the brothers, feeling pressure from without to explain what their Gospel life was about, prepared a short document that was presented to the Pope for his approbation. This document no longer exists, but the brothers, gathered in annual chapter, continued to add to the initial text what they were learning about their life with God, in fraternity, and their engagement in mission (preaching, social service, etc.). Upon his return from Egypt, Francis felt pressure to prepare a document that could explain to them the life into which they had been called, the vocation they had received, and the responsibilities that came as a result. In 1221, St. Francis and his brothers prepared a text that, fundamentally, presented their way of life modeled on the way of life of Jesus presented in the Gospels. This *Regula non bullata* (Early Rule)¹⁵⁴ was to serve to inspire the brothers to commit to follow Jesus. Francis did not want his brothers to be guided by a set of rules to which the brothers were to conform their lives. He wanted them to remain in deep communion with the poor and crucified Lord Jesus, and for them to seek to live this experience of deep communion by living among brothers and sisters who were poor, excluded, exploited, powerless, and landless. Still, this document for evangelical living did not receive sufficient support from the brothers, which meant that Francis was

¹⁵³ Personal communication from him.

¹⁵⁴ FA:ED I:63-86.

required to prepare yet a third document, the *Regula bullata* (1223)¹⁵⁵ that could provide sufficient security to his followers that the way of life they had professed met with the approval of the Church. Perhaps the brothers were acting in good faith, trying to protect the movement from being quashed by the hierarchy of the Church who sought to root out evangelical movements that were critical of the structures, and others that proposed a way of life that—according to the Church’s understanding of its identity and mission—was inconsistent with the received faith. Francis complied with those seeking a stricter description or rule to govern the movement, with the help of friars trained in canon law and the assistance of Cardinal Ugolino. However, Francis would not relent in his conviction that the Gospel provided the fundamental vision and means for achieving what God had asked of him, and what he was convinced God was asking of all the brothers.

Thus, Francis transformed the concept of rule into a way of life, modeled on the life of Jesus discovered through his personal engagement with the biblical texts, from moments of intense prayer and contemplation, and from practicing the way Jesus proposed to his disciples and to Francis. For this reason, Francis’s document on living the Gospel is entitled *Rule and Life*. The *rule* is grounded in Jesus’s experience of living in a particular way what he received from the Father in the waters of the Jordan, and that was further developed in all succeeding moments of his life, the choices he made to love God and love all that God had created, the golden rule. Francis added a few canonical additions to ensure its approval by the Holy See.

The *life* involved the daily re-commitment of Francis and the brothers to seek the way of conversion and transformation. This *Rule and Life* applied equally to all brothers, those at the beginning of their vocational journey as well as those in the middle or nearing the end of their journey. In the mind of Francis, there was no distinction between the responsibilities for receiving and living the way of life of the Gospel set out in the *Rule and Life* between novices and professed members of the Order. Nor was it the case that the older, professed friars were to transmit a set of rules, norms, and regulations to the younger members and novices. What mattered most in the mind of Francis was the centrality of living what the friars professed. They were to be living signs of the very life they

¹⁵⁵ FA:ED I:99-106.

publicly professed, which means they were to be men grounded in a life-giving relationship with God, to be men of prayer. They were to show love and mercy to one another through the daily living out of the Gospel in the fraternity, the privileged place for the revelation of God in the life of the friars. And they were to open their lives in a special way to God's poor, living among those who were discarded, exploited, marginalized. And they were to pursue a life of penance (*metanoia*) that would further open them to the mystery of God present everywhere: in the followers of Islam, in the self-serving political and aristocratic classes, and in all of creation. This progressive conversion process could only take place if the brothers were to come to understand that their vocational journey ran from the moment of their first calling to the day when they would depart from this world and be welcomed into paradise.¹⁵⁶

Mark 1:11: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased”

Mark then tells us that Jesus submitted to the ritual purification and baptism in the waters of the Jordan River conducted by John the Baptist. Mark does not miss the opportunity to inform us that something amazing happens in the life of Jesus: whatever awareness he might have had of his identity and mission prior to the event of baptism, we will probably never know. But the moment Jesus re-emerges from the waters of the Jordan the Spirit of God descends upon him like a dove, and a voice cries out from the heavens: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11). Jesus receives confirmation of a new identity, one that is given to him as gift from God, and that, according to the evangelist, forever changed the course of his life. While Jesus initially took the initiative to leave Nazareth and go into the desert in search of John, here Jesus no longer is in charge; the Spirit of God now assumes the role as chief protagonist. This does not mean that Jesus is exonerated of all personal responsibility, submitting blindly to the will of God. Rather, it means that the calling he received—and I would suggest that all religious receive—begins with God. What follows is a lifelong partnership: God doing what God can do, Jesus walking with us at each stage of our lives, doing the same for us as he did for the disciples at Emmaus, opening our eyes to see the handiwork of God, God's provident presence in our lives, and enabling us to remain constant in our vocational journey.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Francis's “The Admonitions,” “Letter to a Minister,” and “Testament,” in FA:ED I:128-37, 97-98, and 124-27 respectively.

One critical comment is required at this juncture in our reflection. We know that the Gospels are not meant to serve as an historical account, a daily ledger of what transpired in the life of Jesus, his early disciples, and all those who witnessed his life and work. What Mark and the other evangelists provide is unity of identity and action, interpreting: 1) who Jesus is from a theological point of view, and 2) the meaning of his life, words, and actions, not only in his life but in the lives of all who would follow in his way. What emerges from the Gospel stories is thus what Timothy Radcliffe calls “narrative unity,”¹⁵⁷ revealing that each decision, each action of Jesus forms part of a cohesive whole. Jesus’s going to Galilee where he preached about the kingdom of God was a consequence of the decisions he made earlier, which took him to the waters of the Jordan where he was confirmed by God. This action of going into the waters of baptism and being confirmed by God is what then led him to be driven by the Spirit into and through the wilderness/ desert.

Radcliffe continues: “To have an identity is for the choices that one makes throughout one’s life to have a direction, a narrative unity. What I do today must make sense in the light of what I did before. My life has a pattern, like a good story.”¹⁵⁸

Jesus’s life has a pattern; it makes sense from beginning to end. This is precisely what the evangelists perceive in the life of Jesus. Mark has embraced the same call as the one received by Jesus, namely, to become a disciple of the Father. He recognizes that discipleship in the community of the Lord Jesus is an invitation to receive the gift that Jesus received, and to enter into an entirely new way of insight or perceiving and seeing that leads to a new way of living and acting. Jesus’s life becomes the model par excellence for a lifelong commitment to conversion of mind, heart, and deeds required of all Christian disciples. “Follow me” (Mk 1:17; 2:14), “for there were many who followed him” (Mk 2:15). This following of Jesus will lead to many crises and to the cross, but also to the resurrection. Does this have any bearing on our life as consecrated religious today?

¹⁵⁷ Timothy Radcliffe, “The Identity of Religious Today,” keynote to US Conference of Major Superiors (8 August 1996), http://www.dominicans.ca/Documents/masters/Radcliffe/religious_identity.html.

¹⁵⁸ Radcliffe, “Identity of Religious Today.”

Crisis as the Way of Christian Discipleship and a Model for Religious Life

What next takes place in the Markan text is actually quite disturbing because it suggests something fundamental and fundamentally perplexing about discipleship lived in the community of the Christ. Jesus is immediately driven into the desert by the Spirit of God where he will remain for forty days and undergo temptation at the hands of Satan. The text also tells us that he will be accompanied by wild animals and angels who minister to him. Mark's understanding of Christian conversion is actually quite radical. Jesus's own conversion and transformation take place under very strenuous conditions. No matter how glorious some recent spiritual writers have tried to make of it, the desert was no joking matter. Without stretching the text of Mark too far—and taking into account the narrative of this same event in the Gospels of Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13)—I believe we can say that Jesus participated in a formative process that progressively helped him to understand and embrace that which the Father expected of him and, consequently, would be required of him. The first expectation was that he embrace the new identity that God, in the Spirit, was offering to him: “My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” What was required was that he place his entire life at the disposition of God's action and God's intention for him, for the sake of his disciples and for the sake of the world.

Mark's brief text makes reference to the number forty, used symbolically to recall the events of Moses: the exodus, desert wanderings, struggles and sufferings of those who united their lives and hopes in the mission of Moses. These were the hopes of those who followed Moses into the desert that God's promise of fullness of life might come to pass in their lives and those of their descendants. The promise, for which Moses and the Israelites literally risked their lives, comprised three central themes or benefits. First, the promise offered an opportunity to undergo a transformation of the conditions of security for their lives with the dawning of a new reign of peace and tranquility. Second, they hoped that by leaving all behind to follow Moses—thus to follow God—that their lives would be richly blessed with material improvement and that all of their basic needs would be satisfied. Third, they believed that by following Moses in pursuit of God's promise, their lives would become righteous and holy. As with Moses, so with Jesus. Both were considered God-fearing

and God-centered men of faith. Yet this did not mean that their personal holiness or faith would allow them to find shortcuts to the promised land. There are no secret directions for getting to the promised land, no quick access to the promise of coming into the freedom that God offers to those who love and follow him (Cf. Rom 18:18-21).

Fundamental to the stories of both of these God-fearing men is the truth that there is no shortcut to the promised land. One cannot short-circuit what is required to be set free from all that is not of God, to be set free *for* living God's dream for all of humanity and the created universe. Forty days or forty years are just another way of saying that entering the life of discipleship offered, which God offers to each of us, is to enter into a life-long engagement to seek conversion of heart, holiness of life, the pursuit of the justice and the peace of God.

There is a further theological dimension to what Jesus experiences in the desert and that prepares him for his lifelong journey. For Mark, crises and suffering—the result of choosing daily to follow Jesus with an undivided heart—contain the seeds of a redemptive grace. This is God unleashing divine love and mercy upon all peoples, leading to the transformation of human history and the conversion of each disciple who has undertaken the way of Jesus. Is there something we could learn from this theological understanding of redemptive suffering in Mark's portrayal of who Jesus is, and who we are as disciples of the crucified and risen One?

Is there some way we might include the redemptive aspects of suffering that might help us embrace with conviction and commitment a way of life that helps to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, only Jesus! In what way might the theme of redemptive suffering aid us to understand and create ways for living better together, suffering with one another in fraternity/community, and encouraging one another to pursue a lifelong commitment to penance and conversion? Does this theme of redemptive suffering also have something to offer us as we seek new ways to encounter all peoples, especially the poor, excluded, those who have suffered violence in their lives, and particularly those who have had to run for their and their family's lives, abandoning home and country in search of a place to lead productive lives and experience peace, security, and community? We might do well to reflect on the transformative power of the cross in the life of Jesus, his early disciples, and countless Christians over two

millennia. This might allow the power of the cross to transform our ways of living together and give witness to a wounded humanity and planet.

Franciscan Reflection on Crises and Opportunity

In my service as minister general, I have been struck by the difficulties that arise within the lives of the brothers when confronted with adversity. Perhaps it is a sign of the times, but the capacity for brothers to recognize new opportunities for growth through the experience of suffering, self-doubt, disappointment (with self and others) seems to be seriously limited, if not altogether absent. Such experiences include: falling in and out of love; losing zeal for the evangelical life and for missionary evangelization; inability to relate in an adult, healthy manner with those in the service of authority; and the inability to share one's life with brothers in the same community. In a recent meeting with one brother of the Order, he informed me that he could no longer live with the brothers of his local fraternity and that if the provincial did not move him to the community where he wanted to live—if I as general would not intervene on his behalf—he would leave the Order. On another occasion, a brother informed me that, after conducting a serious discernment regarding his vocation and his future, he had decided he could no longer tolerate the local guardian and that he would be moving to another fraternity. The serious discernment consisted of several hours in prayer, talking with his sister, with a close friend, and even with a priest he never before met. When I asked him whether he had spoken with his local fraternity or with the guardian, he informed me that he did not trust any of the brothers who were all were under the thumb of the ill-willed guardian. I also asked whether he had spoken with his provincial. He responded that the provincial “is a weak, old man who does not make any decisions.” If he actually moved to another fraternity, the provincial would do nothing except try to “calm the waters after the storm.”

The point of telling these real-life stories is not simply to shock you. If you have been living the consecrated evangelical life for a period of time, there is probably nothing that will shock you. The best and the worst of humanity is on display in our local fraternities/communities. I also do not relate such stories to suggest that brothers and sisters no longer respect authority in religious life. Maybe, however, I tell them to confirm what you already know: the religious life project our founders received from divine inspiration, a life project to which we are—or are not—

committed, is in serious trouble. The crises experienced in religious life should be recognized for what they are, and for what they are not. These smoking guns are clear signals pointing to the urgent need for us to revitalize our personal and fraternal/collective lives. Ironically, these crises can actually fortify us and clarify our understandings of our own lives and the public commitment we have made, which must be continually purified and translated into the way we relate to God, to our brothers and sisters, and to God's people. They form the quotidian of our lives, the locus of formation to Franciscan and, indeed, to all religious life.

A recent interview with political commentator and respected speaker David Brooks considered his 2016 book, *The Road to Character*.¹⁵⁹ As Brooks relates in the interview, one of the key building blocks for the construction of human character is the ability to discover in weakness the road towards authentic identity. Brooks comments:

Through history, people have gone back into their own pasts, sometimes to a precious time in their life, to their childhood. And, often, the mind gravitates in the past to a moment of shame, something committed, some act of selfishness, a lack of courage... You go into yourself, you find the sin which you've committed over and over again through your life, your signature sin out of which the others emerge. And you fight that sin, and you wrestle with that sin. And out of that wrestling—that suffering—then, a depth of character is constructed. And we're often not taught to recognize the sin in ourselves. And we're not taught in this culture how to wrestle with it, how to confront it and how to combat it.¹⁶⁰

"Out of that wrestling—that suffering—then, a depth of character is constructed." I would like to suggest that one of the most critical aspects of the formative process (from beginning to end, from postulancy to end of life) is that of creating a space within our religious fraternities/communities where we actually help one another learn how to confront the truth about ourselves, those areas of life requiring further conversion. Our beautiful formation documents speak loftily about this confronta-

¹⁵⁹ David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ David Brooks, "Can You Become a Better Person by Confronting Your Worst Self?" Ted Radio Hour (July 16, 2017) <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=532841680>.

tion with self. They speak about the centrality of interpersonal relationships, for which religious are “experts of communion.”¹⁶¹ These same documents tell us that communion is the most vital way to giving concrete form to the evangelical counsels and to the quality of our witness before the world. Still, no matter how much these documents call our attention to our identity as “a living organism of fraternal communion,”¹⁶² our efforts seem to be frustrated by a serious lack of sustained attention to, and formation for, interpersonal fraternal living. Many of us struggle with the forces of individualism present in our fraternities/communities and in our work for evangelization. The strong pull of individualism creates serious difficulties because the individual “I” becomes more important than the collective “we.” The struggles posed by individualism are further complicated by a vision of our identity and mission. Consequently, ministry comes under the spell of a misguided clericalism that seeks privilege, concentrates power, and progressively excludes others from fully participating in the lifelong process of building conditions for the realization of the kingdom of God. In far too many cases in our religious life, fraternity, collaboration, and communion are pushed to the margins, leaving the glorified individual at the center. In this same scenario, even God becomes an unwelcomed stranger.

The three ministers general of the First Order—Capuchins, Conventuals, OFM—spoke about the impact of individualism and clericalism on all programs of formation (initial and ongoing) and the impact this has on the discernment process among men coming to join our way of life. Too many men join with the idea of becoming clerics, using Franciscan religious life as an instrument for attaining the ultimate goal: priesthood. The negative consequences of this attitude upon fraternal life and mission can be devastating, as some or many of you might already have experienced. I have often thought about asking the Vatican whether we could suspend all ordinations in the Order for five years, giving time for the brothers to focus on developing the central vocation God has given to us: the call to a radical evangelical life, cultivated and nourished by prayer, a strong fraternal life, and engagement in the missionary activities of the church. This last missionary dimension is grounded in the social doctrine of the Church, in the promotion of integral human

¹⁶¹ *Vita consecrata*, 46.

¹⁶² “Fraternal Life in Community: *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*,” Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life (1994), 2.b.

development, a new way of speaking about the inseparable relationship between faith and justice, prayer and peace, and lifelong formation to the evangelical counsels. Clearly, the missionary dimension will require us to live among and be formed by those who are poor, excluded, migrants, all those who are living on the front lines in the struggle for human dignity, justice, truth, and reconciliation.¹⁶³

Franciscan Religious Life: A Battle for God

What if religious life were not about embracing lofty ideals, and even less about living a protected, pampered life? Instead, what if it was about choosing to enter the desert, to embrace human and spiritual battle as a necessary consequence for having chosen to place one's entire life in service to God and the kingdom? If we fast forward to the chapters 14 and 15 of Mark's Gospel, we are presented with two texts that deal directly with the suffering that Jesus willingly embraced as a consequence of his decision to remain grounded in God, walking toward the kingdom. In chapter 14, Jesus has to face the prospect of an ignominious, violent death. "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want" (14:36). And in chapter 15, we are presented with one of the most troubling of memories: the cry of Jesus from the cross, one of desperation, confusion, the sense of having been left all alone to face the consequences of his ultimate decision to abandon all for the sake of God's cause, God's dream.

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34). There does not appear to be anything glorious or redemptive coming from these words of desperation, uncertainty, absolute loneliness, a perfect description for the hell or *Gehenna* of the biblical texts. And yet, the cry of Jesus makes sense from within the context of all the choices he made, the way he lived and shared his life with his disciples and group of friends and other followers, discovering God and placing living stones for the temple of the kingdom through a life of evangelical nurturing. There is a narrative unity to the life of Jesus, the same narrative unity we find in the lives of the founders of orders, congregations, and religious institutes. God is the author of this book of life, but Jesus and each of the great charismatic founders were the co-authors. This co-authorship—this invitation to work with God in the continuing

¹⁶³ OFM Curia, "Pilgrims and Strangers: Resources for Formation," (Rome: 2008), 23-24, 31-32, 39-40, *passim*.

elaboration of the unity of our human, spiritual, and Franciscan narrative—allows us to see the pattern of the divine, the sacred operative in our lives, most especially when we ourselves are unable or unwilling to do so. Those moments when we actually step back and behold what God has been doing in our lives and our world, in our religious communities among the brothers and sisters, and in and through our feeble efforts to care for the flock entrusted to our care, we actually catch glimpses into this narrative unity. Things fit in, although not necessarily all things at all times. Nevertheless, there is a great possibility that we will even catch a glimpse of where we are heading, the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus found in the Gospel of John (10:10): fullness of life, an abundance of meaning and purpose, the inheritance of a capacity for love greater than we could ever ask or imagine.

A Personal Story of the Life of a Friar

Recently I spoke with a Franciscan friar who had suffered much at the hands of the Communists in the former Eastern Bloc countries. He narrated all forms of deprivation: food, light, heat, being harassed by the local police force, subjected to physical beatings, and spending extended periods of time in prison. What amazed me is not that he survived these deprivations and difficulties that stretched over many years; what amazed me was the peace that reigned in his heart. He told me the most difficult crisis he faced was a crisis of forgiveness and love. Early on in the experience, he remembers praying for the death of his persecutors. At some later stage, he remembers being faced with a situation with one of the very people who had harmed him and who was experiencing challenging health issues. Although the friar did not want to help the very person responsible for harassments, privations, and physical abuse, still he could not reconcile his refusal to help in light of his being a disciple of Jesus and a follower of Saint Francis. In the end, the friar helped the suffering victimizer.

What leaps out from this story are not the heroic actions of a man who could have chosen to turn his back on the plight of his oppressor. What emerges from this real-life story is that of a Franciscan religious who came to an understanding that he was on a lifelong journey. In some mysterious way, the violence perpetrated by the Communist politician/police officer was transformed into a powerful spiritual tool for reclaiming the dignity that the abusers tried to rob from him. In effect, the

positive response of the Franciscan friar to help his victimizer contributed to the further interior healing, which I believe provided him with a greater capacity to live and to forgive. Life in abundance! One other detail: this Franciscan is known for his care for the other Franciscans in his local community, and for his faithful service of care for brothers more elderly than he: visiting them, encouraging them, sharing his personal journey with them, inviting them to seek the way of healing, restoration, and renewal of their vocational commitment to be disciples of the risen One. This is what St. Paul is speaking about in his letter to the Ephesians:

...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (3:17-19).

Talk about a clear understanding of a narrative unity!

Mark 1:13: “He was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him”

One of the most basic human needs is to feel welcomed, recognized, part of something greater than oneself, loved and nurtured in an environment that facilitates growth in all dimensions of life. So, too, with Jesus. In the midst of the desert—a place normally devoid of life and companionship—Mark introduces two sets of characters who will provide spiritual and physical companionship to Jesus during this time out for purification, for clarification of identity and mission, and for preparation for a very different future. Some biblical scholars suggest that the wild beasts and angels arrived at the last minute, as Jesus was completing whatever experience was necessary for him to undergo; let’s call it his novitiate. Other scholars argue that—following Mark’s bias for painting discipleship in the plural, lived within the context of community—the wild beasts and angels were present with Jesus throughout the entire time. For reasons that will become clear, I subscribe to the latter theological interpretation.

We believe that Jesus did not undergo his novitiate experience alone. In Mark's theology of discipleship, Jesus is surrounded by wild animals and messengers of God, the angelic beings who are perceived to be close to God and close to human beings. For Mark, *all discipleship is accompanied*. Whatever stages one might wish to speak of in the early community of Mark—inquiry, catechumenate, illumination, or mystagogic—the formative experience provided to those who came to Christ was deeply personal. Its goal was to provide accompaniment to the individual as s/he drew closer to Christ and to the community of the missionary disciples. It was meant to be life changing. It also was meant to create within the individual a spiritual docility in which their hearts might become ever more open to Christ speaking in and through his Word; Christ speaking in and through personal and shared life, and in and through participation in the sacramental life and mission of the Church. Aidan Kavanagh states that the rites of Christian initiation, in whatever form they existed in the early Christian communities, served as “a structure of Christian nurture.”¹⁶⁴ He argues the need for the Church to recover this understanding of the conversion process leading the baptized to a lifetime process of conforming oneself to the mind and heart of Christ.

Nurture as a Permanent Condition for Franciscan Religious Life

The concept and practice of nurture as a foundational element in the process of Christian initiation finds deep echoes in the thinking and structures of permanent initiation and ongoing growth into Franciscan religious life. We have already pointed to one of the key elements of this process of nurture: accompaniment. Franciscan friars who have been living in a diversity of intentional Franciscan communities, primarily in Europe, slowly developed a series of reflections on their experiences of a qualitatively different way of living their vocation. According to them, the qualities of these new forms for living Franciscan life revealed these five elements: 1) cultivation of a life of prayer more explicitly intense and shared; 2) structuring of frequent occasions for encounter between the members of the local fraternity/community, allowing for greater sharing of life; 3) the desire to live in a greater simplicity of life that creates within the fraternity greater awareness and sensitivity to the plight of the poor, excluded, marginalized, and suffering; 4) going to the margins

¹⁶⁴ Aidan Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The Rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo, 1978), 182, *passim*.

with a clear message of hope, love, mercy, an evangelizing life that is fundamentally itinerant and not connected to large structures; and 5) reaching out to laity and collaborating with them in shared projects for missionary evangelization in new or more traditional forms.

Following a series of bi-annual meetings and working closely with the OFM General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization, a group of friars who were members of one of these intentional fraternities—i.e., a new form for Franciscan living—prepared a booklet describing their experiences. In that work they proposed a series of fundamental qualities necessary for the nurture of living a more authentic, passionate, and joy-filled Franciscan life.¹⁶⁵ I would like to summarize seven values or characteristics that the friars from these intentional fraternities/communities suggest are *sine qua non* conditions for promoting a greater sense of, and commitment to, lifelong formation and nurture of the vocation we have received:

1. the primacy of the life of prayer and listening actively to the Word of God;
2. care and attention to the nurturing of deep fraternal bonds that witness to a testimony of the faith life of the fraternity—the instrument of regular house chapters to discuss the movement of the Spirit and the quality of relationships between the brothers assumes a privileged role;
3. a simple, sober lifestyle witnessing to minority and total dependence on God and interdependence on the brothers of the fraternity;
4. extending to all those in need and sharing life and fraternity with them;
5. participating in the evangelizing mission of the Church *inter gentes*, through itinerancy, and seeking to associate one's life with those who are poor, suffering, excluded, with a special attention to discovering new frontiers for

¹⁶⁵ *Ite, Nuntiate* ... Guidelines for the New Forms of Life and Mission in the Order (2014, revised 2017), <https://ofm.org/blog/ite-nuntiate-guidelines-for-new-forms-of-life-and-mission-in-the-order-of-friars-minor-2017/>.

evangelization (e.g., interreligious dialogue and intercultural encounter);

6. communion with the local church and collaboration with the laity; and,

7. openness to working closely together with members of other branches of the Franciscan family, and with others.

To this list, I would add one further dimension that is vital to the goal of deeper conversion and the nurturing of a more authentic Franciscan (consecrated) life: heightened sensitivity to issues of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, thus integrating all of the prior seven values into a vision of full human development, as modeled by Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaudium* and *Laudato si'*.

The process of nurture that *Ite, Nuntiate* seeks to promote recognizes that all the brothers are responsible for the care and growth of each another. The role of the guardian is first to live in fidelity to the life he has professed. Then he must be open to listening and accompanying each brother: encouraging them, correcting them, and seeking to promote opportunities for the growth of each and of all in the fraternity in what it means to be free in Christ Jesus.

Keep It Simple: The Role of the Quotidian in Revolutionizing the World

The context for living these eight central values, which are necessary for the nurture of our evangelical vocation, “is that of ordinary life in the local fraternity, inserted into the cultural, social and political world.”¹⁶⁶ Franciscan formation is experienced in the quotidian: in the daily rubbing of shoulders, liturgical celebrations, contributing to the upkeep of the house, cooking a meal, attending to a sick friar, listen to the brothers, reaching out to someone who has experienced some tragedy, sharing life and personal narratives of what God is doing in the lives of each person, participating in the regular life of the fraternity, and making ourselves available to each other so that we might become more available to the Other: God.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, “*You Have Been Called to Freedom*,” *Formation in the Order of Friars Minor* (Rome, 2018), no. 25.

¹⁶⁷ *Vita consecrata*, no. 69.

It is by living a style of life grounded in a spirit of nurturing that one that gives priority to the normal rather than the exceptional, celebrating moments of grace in the small things. These are the ways that we slowly but deliberately create conditions for allowing the members of our fraternities, our provinces, and our Orders to experience God, to experience their and our humanity, and to nurture the desire to engage with the world.

We want to welcome new vocations to our specific form of religious life. Not all would agree, however, that each of our fraternities/ communities are living a sufficiently healthy quality of spiritual, human, fraternal, and apostolic life. For this reason, Orders and Congregations cherry pick those communities where there is some semblance of the living out of values we profess. Candidates are taken to meet friars living in these boutique fraternities/communities. The problem, however, is that our Franciscan life is not about creating boutique fraternities, something also true for all other forms of religious life. Rather, it is about generating a desire among all members to want to live daily, in some way or another, the central values that should guide our personal and communal lives.

The more we are able to create and expand the number of fraternities founded on the most basic of our evangelical values, the easier it will be for all of our brothers—especially our younger brothers in initial formation—to experience the continuity that should exist between initial and ongoing formation. Far too often, friars transitioning from the initial to the permanent stage of formation (i.e., into lifelong formation) discover a wide gap between these two formative moments. Borrowing the London Underground’s continuous reminders to mind the gap, far too often religious life cultivates a mentality of those on the journey and those who have arrived. One friar once sarcastically referred to houses of initial formation as “fantasy islands.” He added: “We need to teach them what Franciscan life is like in the real world.” For religious of a certain temperament, the real world is the place where little is expected and even less is shared, a place where religious live and die in isolation, loneliness, apathy, and even bitterness. God is calling all friars and all religious of the same Order or Congregation to assume our responsibility for creating conditions necessary so that we might help one another continue to choose to welcome God’s gift of our vocation each and every day as something new and potentially revolutionary: for our lives, our

Orders or Congregations, the Church, and the world. It is in this way that our fraternities will become centers for human and spiritual growth, a place where we can practice what it means to be alive for the Gospel, and a place where we can learn new ways to invest ourselves in the life of the world. We must remember that Jesus goes to Galilee and other regions once he has welcomed his vocation and taken steps to purify and deepen it. Jesus reveals a willingness to put into daily practice the deepening of his vocation—his intimate relationship with the Father—together with those he called to “follow me” (Mk 1:17; 2:14). It is from this deep experience of being evangelized that Jesus and the disciples undertake the mission of preaching and giving witness to the kingdom of God. Clearly, within the context of the Gospel of Mark, we witness the difficulties the disciples experienced in trying to understand the full implications of the vocation each had received and the challenge that Jesus places before them to “deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (8:33-34).

Called to Live According to the Pattern of the Holy Gospel¹⁶⁸

In 2012, the OFMs initiated a study of the situation of the 13,000 friars living in 121 countries in the world. A questionnaire containing 153 questions was forwarded to 1,500 friars who represented the broadest of age, region, apostolic engagement, culture, and language groups present in the Order. Ninety-three percent of those who received the questionnaire responded. More than forty percent of the friar respondents said that their lives had become dry, that they had run out of gas, and that their connection with God was weakening. A smaller percentage of friars felt their lives were progressively overrun with activities and activism, producing within them a sense or feeling being, somehow, out of place in Franciscan and religious life. As a consequence, a similar number of respondents were concerned by the fact that they felt very little emotional attachment to their brothers in the local fraternity, the province, and the Order. Some said they were living on the “fumes of the desire and experience of intense prayer” that they experienced before joining the Order or, perhaps, in novitiate.

Stories from some friars about running out of gas and feeling disconnected from the fraternity and values of Franciscan life are also present

¹⁶⁸ LR 1.1 = FA:ED I:100.

in the reports from Canonical Visitation to the entities of the Order. We hear about tired, angry, sad, lonely, lone-ranger friars who feel that their experience of living in a friary/local community is more like living in Hotel St. Francis. They live like a registered guest, consume food and drink, and have all the comforts necessary for survival. At the same time, they also do not assume any responsibility for the life of the local fraternity. They take and take without giving.

Unfortunately, this story applies not only to older OFM members who perhaps have had a different type of formation for Franciscan religious life: one that promoted individualism and a mentality of the survival of the fittest. Even today there are regions of the Order—and I would venture to say this is true in other Orders and forms of consecrated life—where the friar/religious lives alone, justifying a lifestyle of individualism while hiding behind the argument that they are responding to the needs of the local Church and to the people of God. When I sometimes speak with the people of God and with the bishops, I hear a very different story. They talk about the lone-ranger religious who listens to no one and who is always too busy with things that have little to do with meeting pastoral needs.

In religious life we also must confront situations where friars/religious spend a great deal of time on personal maintenance: making sure their world is structured in ways that seldom challenge them to grow, surrounding themselves with brick and mortar as well as digital barriers, and expending untold energy acquiring “likes” on their Facebook page. The net result of these forms of self-maintenance is a distancing from the fraternity, from the people of God among whom we are called to live and share good news, and ultimately even from God. The 2012 questionnaire on the “State of the OFM Order” also documents how hard it is for religious who are consumed with self-maintenance and creating a safe, secure, and luxurious environment to imagine that Franciscan evangelical life is not about security, stability and ensuing stagnation (as though there is some implicit fourth vow supporting our preferred lifestyle), allowing the dream they once received, the vocation they once nurtured, to die. The words from the song “I Dreamed a Dream” come to mind:

I dreamed a dream in time gone by, when hope was high,
 and life worth living.
 I dreamed that love would never die, I dreamed that God
 would be forgiving.
 Then I was young and unafraid, and dreams were made
 and used and wasted.
 There was no ransom to be paid, no song unsung, no wine
 untasted.
 But the tigers come at night, with their voices soft as thunder,
 As they tear your hope apart, as they turn your dreams to
 shame.¹⁶⁹

Recovering the Dream: On Discernment

When I was provincial in St. Louis (11 months of service beginning in 2008), I met with a friar who had been doing the same service in the province for more than 25 years. I asked him to embark on something entirely new and different, one requiring that he learn Spanish, share life with a faith community composed largely of Catholics from Mexico, and be open to eating the food, drinking the beverages, and enjoying the sounds of music of the people among whom we have been asked to go. His first response was that of anger. He asked me: “How could you take me away from the work I have been doing, doing so well, and from the life I have built for myself?” This was less a question than an indictment against my decision to ask him to move on to a new fraternity and ministry. I explained to him all of the reasons why I thought he was the right person at the right time for what I believed would become the right fit for him, for the friars among whom he would live, and also for the people of God. He asked for time to “discern” his response. A week later, he came to me and presented a laundry list of motives for not accepting the change of ministry and fraternity. In the end, he accepted the change, more out of a sense of obedience to his superior rather than welcoming new opportunities for fraternal living and evangelization, for further growth for his religious vocation. I met him three years later after moving to Rome to serve the Order. He came and gave me a big hug. “Thank you! I did not trust you, nor did I believe the new work and fraternity to where

¹⁶⁹ From *Les Misérables*, original French-language lyrics by Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel (1980), English language lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer with additional material by James Fenton (1985); see <https://www.azlyrics.com/l/lesmiserablescast.html>.

I was to be assigned would be good for me. I must tell you, I have never been happier in my forty years of Franciscan life. The new fraternity and ministry have opened my eyes to see just how old and self-centered I had become.”

Mark 1:14: “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God”

The Gospel of Mark concludes the initial stage of Jesus’s formation/conversion process with movement. For Mark, conversion to God’s kingdom agenda is initiated by God, received by the disciple—in this case, his beloved Son—shared among the disciples with the Master (Rabbi Jesus), and proclaimed to the world. For the evangelist, the formative process towards discipleship in the community of Jesus promotes unity with God, fraternal communion as an expression of this spiritual unity, and the desire and responsibility to communicate to others the good news one has received and in which one has placed one’s trust. In each of the Gospels, an explicit link is made between movement towards God, towards fellow members on the way (in the community of disciples), and movement outward towards the world. There is no authentic evangelization without unity and communion lived with God and among the disciples. Yet, neither can one come to a deeper understanding of who God is, and the nature of God’s mission, unless and until we join in the movement. Each contributes to the completion of the other, leading to deeper faith and spiritual maturity, and to a deeper understanding and acceptance of one’s own humanity and that of others. Perhaps it is for this reasons that the OFMs have discovered the direct link between fraternity and mission. The documents of the Order speak of all communities of friars as “Fraternities-in-Mission.” There is no disconnect between living a radical life of discipleship in Jesus Christ, being a member of the Body of Christ (the Church) and being a member of the Order of Friars Minor. All converge in the experience of evangelical life when it is lived as a continuation, a deepening, of the primary call to be missionary disciples.¹⁷⁰

The same that can be said about discipleship in the community of Jesus can also be said about religious life. Movement is absolutely essential for growth in vocational awareness, for deepening one’s identity, and for

¹⁷⁰ EG 24, 40, *passim*.

experiencing greater freedom to live the Gospel life with love, peace, and joy. One might ask, however, “How is this movement to be achieved?” Here, a healthy dose of creativity, spontaneity, and also risk-taking is necessary. Programs involving stages or flex mission or overseas training programs are helpful instruments. They promote an opening of one’s life to new realities, new cultures, new languages, and thus make a contribution to increasing one’s capacity to live inter-culturally and inter-generationally.

These latter two are becoming ever more urgent as religious orders and congregations take on a more diversified face—welcoming new members from virtually anywhere in the world—and as our provinces (at least those in the US) continue to experience aging and diminishment. All these initiatives should be seen as tools vital for lifelong formation. No age requirements hold; all are welcome to apply!

True evangelical movement involves linking our lives to that of Jesus, to the lives of the poor and marginalized,¹⁷¹ to the Church, and to fellow religious. This movement opens our horizons to new possibilities for living the Gospel and the evangelical counsels with a new freedom, the freedom to love of which St. Paul speaks (Gal 5:13). This is precisely what Pope Francis has in mind by insisting on the need for the Church, for all disciples, and for us religious, to “go out” (Lat., *uscire*) to become a missionary community of God in service to all of humanity and to creation. He writes:

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of

¹⁷¹ cf. EG 179ff.

remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat.”¹⁷²

Conclusion: On “Waking Up the World”

There are, admittedly, at least four shortcomings in what I have tried to share with you. First, I have formulated many of my reflections bearing in mind the members of the Order of Friars Minor for whom I bear a special responsibility. I also had in mind my brother Capuchins and Conventuals with whom I share both an effective and affective affinity and charismatic identity. My intention was not to exclude any other of the Franciscan groups present and with whom I share a close affinity. Rather, I sought to talk about something I think I know something about, without inventing or projecting images about Franciscan groups of which I know very little. Still, I believe that many elements that apply to the OFMs and other members of the First Order and TOR also find resonance in the lived experience of other religious congregations of Franciscans.

Second, much of the language used by the Church and by our respective Orders and Congregations, formulated in *Ratio formationis* documents, focuses attention not only on the theological, spiritual, and ecclesial dimensions of formation to religious life, but also provides a series of recommendations for how to promote lifelong conversion, which is the goal of all formation to religious life. Rather than simply repeating what is contained in these documents, I have opted to risk directly engaging with the events and theological significance of Jesus’s lifelong conversion to the mission of God’s kingdom presented by the evangelist Mark, and to which I have added my own creative flair. The reason I have taken this approach is that I am convinced the seeds or essential elements for understanding the mission, scope, and methods for life formation towards union with God, with the brothers and all other human beings, and with all of creation, are present in the opening chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark. If I were accustomed to act in a more classical manner (which I am not), I probably would have taken the image of the Transfiguration

¹⁷² EG 49.

that guides St. John Paul II's reflection on the meaning and mission of religious life.¹⁷³ *Mea culpa!* It also is a valid reflection and opens to us other insights into the mystery of vocation and lifelong formation.

My third shortcoming is that I have opted not to include in this presentation issues related to sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable peoples for the simple reason that it merits a particular attention that goes beyond the scope of the time allotted to me at this symposium. Our public commitment to the evangelical counsels and our search for integrity of life and mission require that we give specific attention to life-long formation for responsible living, as a matter of faith and justice. Thus, all programs of formation should contain tools and methods for helping each of us integrate our sexuality and affective needs in a way that promotes healthy, holistic relationships among the members of our respective orders and congregations, and in all of our relationships that are created and nurtured through our missionary, apostolic activities.

A fourth shortcoming is my regret that my thoughts and recommendations might not be bold enough to help us move in a direction that not only responds to the call of Pope Francis to "Wake up the world,"¹⁷⁴ but that will actually convince us that in order to be passionate and faithful missionary disciples, we must embrace a way of living the Gospel. Such a Gospel living can render our hearts malleable, revitalize the quality of interpersonal relationships—including a quality fraternal experience of life that is life-giving—and transform our missionary outreach into a collaborative, two-by-two experience capable of reflecting a model of discipleship that is forged on the road of daily shared life.

At the last OFM General Chapter (2015), a number of brothers from entities in Latin America brought forth a proposal seeking to include in our General Statutes a recommendation that, where possible, our houses of initial formation (including novitiate) be located in neighborhoods where the inhabitants experience all forms of exclusion, deprivation, poverty, violence, and dehumanization. The motive behind this proposal was not based exclusively on the evangelical value of poverty and the promotion of simplicity of life in response to our charism and the call of Pope Francis for religious to embrace the way of the poor Christ

¹⁷³ Cf. his *Vita consecrata*.

¹⁷⁴ Pope Francis's meeting with the Union of Superiors General, 29 November 2013, as reported at <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-religious-must-wake-up-the-world/>.

by association with those who are excluded, although this certainly had some influence. Rather, the brothers' call to move formation houses to the margins was an invitation to radicalize our way of life and systems of formation, further enabling the young candidates, novices, and temporary professed to be afforded an experience of coming to a deeper awareness of their dependence on God alone, and interdependence on the brothers of the local fraternity, Province/entity, and Order. Personally, I welcome such initiatives on condition that *all* the brothers of such a province or entity accompany and invest in such a move. It is one thing to send young lambs to the slaughter. It is another to send the fatted rams.

In whatever direction our efforts take us, I remain convinced that we can change the way we think about the formative conversion process in which all of us are engaged. We can find new and more effective ways to promote the active participation of all our fellow religious/friars in giving specific shape and content to this process. Furthermore, we can help one another discover and articulate the narrative unity that gives shape to our identity, offering redemptive possibilities to the way of life we have received as gift from God to which we are willing to commit all of our energies, in the best and the worst of times. Perhaps when we have done all we can to move ourselves in these directions, placing the crucified Lord Jesus at the center, we will discover that in fact, we already are acting as witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! I still dream the dream! Do you?

Stewarding the Grace of Fraternitas

Margaret Eletta Guider OSF

And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Gospel.¹⁷⁵

The presentation that I was invited to give was entitled “Mission through the lens of evangelization.” The presentation was to be guided by the question: “How does evangelization prod us to listen and respond to the world?” But the more I thought about it the more I realized the following: Good title. Good question. But ... before we talk about mission and evangelization, some prior reflection on brotherhood is in order.

As I pondered the words of the *Testament*, I became attentive to the fact that it was only *after* the Lord gave brothers to Francis that the Most High God revealed to him that he should live according to a form of life based on the Gospel. His experience of call did not unfold as many might think: commitment to the evangelical life first, and relationship with the brothers second.

Informed by this insight, I realized that perhaps a more adequate and appropriate way to reflect upon your participation in God’s mission—the *missio Dei*—is not through the lens of evangelization, but rather, through the lens of brotherhood or to be more precise the grace of *fraternitas* that uniquely Franciscan missionary charism of “being brothers” in the Church and the World.

¹⁷⁵ Test 14 = FA:ED I:125.

We know from The *Testament* that Francis received this grace of *fraternitas*. We also know that he stewarded this grace in the company of those he embraced as brothers in times of exuberant joy and in times profound grief. For Francis, both in the best of times and in the worst, *fraternitas* was the foundation for living the evangelical life. As the Jesuits would say: it was his *way of proceeding* in the service of God's mission.

And What About You? Disposing Yourself to the Grace of *Fraternitas*

Following the example of the General Minister, my Franciscan brother and my former classmate, Michael Perry, I, too, will turn to Scripture as a starting point for reflection. [On this occasion of Catholic Theological Union's fiftieth anniversary, this is definitely a hallmark of our shared CTU formation for mission]. Mindful of the Parable of the Talents, always a thought-provoking point of reference from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 25:14-30), I invite you to take a few moments to think about the three servants as examples of stewardship particularly for you as brothers upon whom the grace of *fraternitas*—the charism of brotherhood—has been, is, and will continue to be poured out through the Spirit's holy manner of working.

There are those servants who are faithful, yet fearful about losing the little they have been given and overly cautious to their own detriment. There are those servants who are creative, doubling the portion that they have received, but ever conscious of being endowed with less than others. And, there are those servants who, in their exercise of fidelity and creativity with what they have been given and what they have received, are neither afraid of risk-taking nor constrained by the human tendency to be diminished by comparisons.

However, before you start identifying with one of the three examples individually—in terms of yourself or collectively—in terms of the fraternity to which you belong, I urge you to consider what these examples reveal about the interactive dynamics of stewardship and the ways in which the grace of *fraternitas*—no matter in what measure it is divinely given or humanly received—is buried, doubled, or quintupled.

Setting the Grace(s) of *Fraternitas* at the Service of God's Mission

Drawing upon the writings of St. Bonaventure on grace, I invite you to consider the following passage: “Therefore, if you wish to have the love of the Son and of the originating Principle, and of the Gift that is the Holy Spirit, *dispose yourself for grace*.” Bonaventure then goes on to question: “*Whence does grace take its origins?*” And in response to the question, he answers: “I say that it has its beginning with the Father of lights, through the incarnate Word, through the crucified Word, and through the inspired Word.”¹⁷⁶

Taking these insights from Bonaventure as a framework for reflection, I would like to explore three ways in which the grace of *fraternitas*—as experienced in the life and witness of Francis of Assisi and in your own—may be understood as an extraordinary charism given for service in God's mission. To the extent that every brother—by virtue of his profession—disposes himself to this grace of *fraternitas* each one must render a response to the generative question that I put before you today: What kind of stewards of this grace of *fraternitas* have you been? What kind of stewards are you now?

And perhaps, most importantly, what kind of stewards of this grace do you desire to become as together you contemplate not only your respective presence in the service of God's mission but your *shared* future, a future that is unfolding right here, right now? “Behold,” says the Lord, “I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Is 43:19) Since I have raised these questions, it is only fair that I offer some ways of approaching them.

Returning to Bonaventure's insights, I propose the following framework for reflection.

The Grace of *fraternitas* and the Incarnate Word: The Evangelizing Mission of Being Open to the New

The Grace of *fraternitas* and the Crucified Word: The Evangelizing Mission of Confronting the Mystery of Evil

¹⁷⁶ St. Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, intro. and trans. by Zachary Hayes, notes by Robert J. Karris (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publication, 2008) I.8, 35.

The Grace of *fraternitas* and the Inspired Word: The Evangelizing Mission of Ultimate Formation for the Sake of the Reign of God

I. The Grace of *Fraternitas* and the Incarnate Word: Embracing the Mystery of God and the Evangelizing Mission of Being Open to the New

“Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: We no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’”¹⁷⁷ When it comes to using the language of “mission” and arriving at a precise definition of the term, it seems there are as many ways as there are desires.

For our purposes today, it is my understanding that the term “mission” does not refer to something the Church does or something that Franciscans do. Rather, the word “mission” refers to the very being of God—the Triune God who is God-for-Us.¹⁷⁸ Mission understood in this Trinitarian sense originates in the *missio Dei*: God’s mission.

As the mystery of the God is revealed in the sending of the Son to be God-with-Us¹⁷⁹ so, too, the grace of *fraternitas* is revealed in the Incarnate Word, as Jesus, our Brother (Heb 2:10-18).

As bearers of the divine image and likeness, we are called to participate in God’s mission, ever mindful of the fact that our God is a God who acts in history. As participants in God’s mission we, too, are called to act in history as disciples of Jesus Christ and as missionaries gifted by the Spirit and sent to proclaim God’s Word as a “community of missionary disciples.”¹⁸⁰

As a protagonist of missionary discipleship, Pope Francis has made the concept a hallmark of his papacy and a source of inspiration for engaging the missiological imagination of local churches throughout the world. Mindful of the signs of the times, Pope Francis has emphasized the critical importance of specific aspects of formation in the lives of missionary

¹⁷⁷ EG 120.

¹⁷⁸ See Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Jn 1:14; Is 7:14; Mt 1:23.

¹⁸⁰ EG 24.

disciples: to embrace a vocational identity, to experience a grace-filled sense of purpose, and to sustain a passionate commitment to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world through the evangelizing mission of presence and encounter characterized by joy.

As brothers responding to the call to participate in God's mission you have been challenged by your own documents as well as countless ecclesial documents to consider the ways in which your ministries of presence and encounter must be at the heart of your particular witness to the Gospel. By way of one concrete example, I encourage you to think about the young women you have accompanied in the discovery of their Franciscan hearts and their vocations as missionary disciples through FrancisCorps, Franciscan Mission Service, and Cap Corps. Over the years, I have had the privilege of teaching some of them. I am conscious of the fact that joining a congregation like my own, of which I am one of the younger members in North America, holds little attraction or appeal. Moreover, their primary bonds of Franciscan affection are with you—with your provinces, your friars, your histories, and your particular charisms: charisms that they know and love and with which they have roots.

As the Synod on Youth, Vocation and Discernment concludes this week, we are all urged to think about vocations to Franciscan-Clarean life in the United States and other places in the world. With this in mind, I ask you to think about the initiative of Francis on Clare's behalf, and similarly, about the initiative of Friar Pamfilo of Magliano in the 1850s as he facilitated entrance into Franciscan life for a few young women who later became the Allegany Franciscans, and a few other young immigrant women who later became the Joliet Franciscans. He took a risk and opened himself to the new. Might you consider doing something similar? Returning to Italy a few years later, Father Pamfilo trusted that these foundations were not his work, but the work of the Spirit. He did what was his to do. And, he trusted that God would act.

A century later, quite by chance and more work of the Spirit, these two congregations would meet in Goiás, Brazil, to embark on something new—not alone, but in the company of friars from the Holy Name Province, the Society of the Atonement, the Poor Clares from Wappinger Falls, New York, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother from Wisconsin, the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor from Ohio, the Franciscan Sisters of

St. Joseph from Hamburg, New York, and an OFS diocesan priest from Camden, New Jersey, formed by the TOR friars in Pennsylvania. Together they found themselves involved in an evangelizing mission of presence and encounter.¹⁸¹ Over time, that has given rise to new communities, monasteries, and provinces in Brazil. Amidst the life processes of beginnings and endings, of flourishing and completion, of legacy and leave-taking, this history underscores one intuition and imperative:

You must be open to the new!

The new that awaits you, like the Reign of God, is already in your midst. It is both “already” and “not yet.” When it comes to embracing the new that God places before you, consider how many times in the course of your life you have pondered the words from the Prophet Isaiah 55:8-9—“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares our God. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” When these words, like ardent pieces of charcoal, were placed not on the tongue of the prophet Isaiah, he knew in his heart, that our Most High God was not kidding. How long have you been following Jesus on the way, “and you still do not know me?” (Jn 14:9) “New” means new, not just an updated version of something old!

II. The Grace of *Fraternitas* and the Crucified Word: The Evangelizing Mission of Confronting the Mystery of Evil

“Go rebuild My house; as you see, it is all being destroyed.”¹⁸² What does it mean for you as brothers to break open the Crucified Word of God, to confront the mystery of evil, and make meaning of its significance for your lives and the lives of others?

Last year, I met with one of my former students, who now is in a position of leadership within his religious institute. At the time he was dealing with the ongoing consequences of the sexual abuse crisis that were affecting his own congregation directly. He said to me, “This is something for which you never prepared me.” For days, I pondered his words. He was correct. Rarely was reflection on the *mysterium iniquitatis* a part of

¹⁸¹ Margaret Eletta Guider, “U.S. Franciscan Missionaries in Goiás, Brazil (1943-2013): Leave-Taking and Legacy,” ACHA Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, January 4, 2014.

¹⁸² 2C, First Book, IV.10 = FA:ED II:249.

the curriculum. As witnesses to the tragic consequences and unrelenting aftershocks of the phenomenon of abuse you know all too well the countless ways in which this *mysterium iniquitatis* continues to run its course.

Indeed, it is a soul-devouring dragon (Rev 12:17) that has yet to be slain or definitively tamed, a beast that continues to be stronger than the chains put in place to bind it, a nefarious force that vomits raging torrents of life-threatening waters throughout the earth. Yet, as we know from the Book of Revelation, the soul-devouring dragon of the apocalyptic vision is not slain, chained, or tamed by human forces. We know how the story ends and that ultimately the power of heaven prevails (Rev 20:10). A vision of a new heaven earth is revealed, and with it, the promise that God is with God's people, promising to wipe every tear from their eyes, promising that there will be no more death or mourning, or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away (Rev 2:3-4). For all of those affected by the phenomenon of sexual abuse in whatever form, living this new vision may seem impossible as the anguished question 'Where is God?' continues to echo in the minds and hearts of so many. For those of you entrusted with the responsibility for forming a new generation of brothers to serve the People of God, it is essential that you accompany them in the process of learning to live with this haunting question and with the dangerous memories that gave rise to it. At the same time, you also must create the conditions that will enable them to find the river, the water, the tree of life, with all of its fruits, and especially its leaves (Rev 22:1-2), that they may be the brothers the People of God need— and deserve.¹⁸³

Indeed, the Crucified Word invites you to do more than see and judge; it requires you to act, to make connections, and to put into practice what you say you believe: that participation in God's mission is central to your lives, that every vocation involves the cost of discipleship, and that every abuse of power, including the power to neglect, is a failure to adhere to the prophetic example of Jesus for whom power is rightly understood as the service of love.

¹⁸³ Margaret Eletta Guider, Conclusão do "O Dragão Devorador de Almas," in *Formação: Desafios Morais*, ed. Ronaldo Zacharias, et al. (Sao Paulo: Paulus, 2018), 279. [English translation: Conclusion of "The Soul-devouring Dragon."]

As Pope Francis frequently reminds us all, the vocation of the missionary disciple is demanding. Inevitably, it involves the experience of having to recognize, shoulder, and carry the weight of reality,¹⁸⁴ to be witnesses, and if necessary, martyrs, to be messengers of reality,¹⁸⁵ and ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11-21),¹⁸⁶ especially in circumstances where people's confidence in God and others has been eroded by an overwhelming sense of affliction.

And yet, amidst the shadows and darkness inherent in the vocation of the missionary disciple, is the capacity to identify with the person of Jesus Christ, and to know through our experiences of encounter with the divine presence, that despite all evidence to the contrary, you are not alone. The Most High God has given you brothers. For our God, in whose image and likeness we have been created, is a God who truly is God-With-Us. And, herein lies the mystery of what it means to imitate Christ, and to follow in the footsteps of the One who is willing to share in the sufferings of others for the sake of love. Faced as you may be with the dangerous memories of the past, uncertainties about the present, and anxieties about the future, do you as brothers strengthen and encourage one another to place your trust in the One who has called you by name?

How does the grace of *fraternitas* enable you to find the courage and humility needed to remain steadfast in your confidence in God's grace and mercy so that you may be witnesses to truth and ambassadors of reconciliation?

III. The Grace of *Fraternitas* and the Inspired Word: The Evangelizing Mission of Ultimate Formation for the Sake of the Reign of God

When was the first time that you passionately proclaimed: "*This is what I want ... this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart*"?¹⁸⁷ And now for my second question: When was the most recent time? As brothers, you live in an expansive present where witnesses to the Gospel Way

¹⁸⁴ See Kevin F. Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 127.

¹⁸⁵ See Michael E. Lee, *Revolutionary Saint: The Theological Legacy of Oscar Romero* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018), 159-161.

¹⁸⁶ See Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998).

¹⁸⁷ 1C IX:22 = FA:ED I:201-202.

of life and Franciscan participation in God's mission are needed more than ever.

Your unfolding future carries with it one guarantee: with every day that passes you are one step closer to completing your journey home to God. Mindful of that fact, here is a question that I ask you to hold in your hearts today: *What time is it?* The answer is a simple yet challenging one: It is time to wake up and wake up the world.

At the beginning of your Franciscan journey as brothers, you were invited into a process of so-called initial formation, followed by a process of so-called ongoing formation, for life in mission: prayer, fraternity, and ministry. But when was the last time you heard a brother speak of “ultimate formation” for the sake of the Reign of God? When Bonaventure ascended the mountain of LaVerna, where he wrote *The Soul's Journey into God*,¹⁸⁸ he was not laying out a thirteenth-century step-by-step Trip-Tik or providing a medieval GPS mapping to assist souls in finding their way home to God. Rather, he was affirming that our life is an ascent to God, a process that is not something we are able to undertake, control, or bring to completion on our own—“God must pull you up.”¹⁸⁹ And you, for your part, must be open to the graces and demands of this being pulled up (Mt 14:22-33), precisely by remembering those experiences that are foundational to your ultimate formation for the *missio Dei*.

As those brothers who have gone before you in faith know from the vantage point of eternity, the journey of union with God cannot be understood narrowly as the end-of-life journey in service of God's Mission. Rather, it must be understood for what it truly is—a daring journey in service of God's Mission that requires you to live with eyes wide open, to live joyfully and hopefully as you move throughout life, regardless of whether you are in the first or second chapter of your lives or moving into the third and fourth chapters. For those who may be wondering “When exactly does this leg of the journey begin?” I would say that the experience of ultimate formation in service of God's Mission begins the day that you recognize by divine inspiration that you are one day closer

¹⁸⁸ Bonaventure—*The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. and intro by Ewert Cousins, pref. by Ignatius Brady (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 51-116.

¹⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, “Love Sees Further Than Reason,” catechesis given in Rome, 17 March 2010, <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/love-sees-further-than-reason>.

to bringing to completion all that has been and all that continues to be yours to do.

Ultimate formation for service in God's mission involves remembering that you have come from God and preparing yourselves for your return to God. It involves the kind of intentionality, watchfulness, trust, desire, joy, and intimacy that leads to ever deeper love.

In sum, it involves remaining attentive to the many ways in which God is pulling you up to ever greater participation in the *missio Dei* and drawing you into an experience of ever deeper union—with the One whom you seek, the One in whom you hope, the One for whom you long, the One through whom you rise, the One you receive, the One in whom you exalt, and the One to whom you finally cling.¹⁹⁰

Conclusion

As brothers of the First Order and the Third Order Regular, do not underestimate how much your common witness is needed by the entire Franciscan-Clarean family. Not only is it critical to *your* futures, it is critical to *all* our futures. May you remain attentive to the Incarnate Word, the Crucified Word, and the Inspired Word. May you be enchanted by the wonder of life and possibility, transformed by the pathos of human suffering and vulnerability, and moved by the power of divine inspiration.

And may your inner capacity to receive the grace of fraternitas continue to be stretched and enlarged as you cultivate—across the life span—a genuine desire to steward in faithful and creative ways this grace of fraternitas in the service of God's mission.

¹⁹⁰ Adapted from Saint Bonaventure, *The Enkindling of Love (The Triple Way)*, III.C.8, ed. by William I. Joffe (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1956).

Liquidity and the Abyss: Lifelong Theological Formation for U.S. Franciscans

Daniel P. Horan OFM

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak at this important event in which we explore together themes relating to lifelong formation for Franciscan men within the particular context of the United States. While our respective branches on the Franciscan family tree may look from the outside to vary one from the next, reflecting certain variations in habit and constitution, the core of our shared *vita evangelica* (“Gospel Life”) and the lifeblood that flows like sap throughout is the very same shared tradition launched by Francis and Clare of Assisi eight centuries ago, which serves to maintain our diverse unity.

When invited to present some points of reflection with you today, I was told two key things. First, I should focus on the theological trends, challenges, and hopes of our time that are perhaps overlooked in many formation settings (and even some academic ones) and yet ought to be recognized and attended to by Franciscans today. Second, I was to keep my remarks to around twenty-five minutes. Period. Both of these are formidable requests; the latter may, in fact, be the more difficult.

Given the time constraints, I have organized my remarks into two major parts. Part One is a look at our contemporary context, as well as the social and theological landscape. It is, as it were, an exercise in naming the “signs of the times” as *Gaudium et spes* describes¹⁹¹ it or the initial seeing or recognition step of the “See, Judge, Act” methodology outlined

¹⁹¹ GS 4.

by John XXIII in *Mater et magistra*.¹⁹² Part Two is where I name two particular theological themes that I see largely unaddressed today and propose them to you as loci for lifelong Franciscan formation. These two themes are not meant to be exclusive but are presented as illustrations of pressing theological questions that we ought to recognize, name, and begin to address from within our particular Franciscan tradition. It is my hope that our processing and discussion of these questions might lead to further emphasis on these and similar topics as we move forward.

The Context of Now: Liquidity, the Abyss, and the Decolonial Turn

The Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et spes*) identified a central task of Christian discipleship, stating: "The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel."¹⁹³ This activity, described famously by John XXIII as the seeing or perceiving act of the reduction of theological principles to pragmatic action, requires that we take a clear and sober look at what I will call the context of *now*. *Gaudium et spes* further explains this urgent dimension:

In language intelligible to every generation, [the church] should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.¹⁹⁴

In other words, it is necessary for us to make sense of the context in which the Franciscan family now stands in order to understand anything about the theological themes that we must consider. This is where I draw on the metaphorical imagery of "liquidity" and "the abyss."

It has become customary throughout the second half of the twentieth century to describe our historical, intellectual, and cultural milieus as

¹⁹² John XXIII, *Mater et magistra*, On Christianity and Social Progress (15 May 1961), online at: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html. For more on the origins of the see-judge-act methodology, pioneered by Joseph Cardinal Cardijn, see Justin Sands, "Introducing Cardinal Cardijn's See-Judge-Act as an Interdisciplinary Method to Move Theory into Practice," *Religions* 9 (2018), <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/4/129>.

¹⁹³ GS 4.

¹⁹⁴ GS 4.

postmodern. The term—admittedly ambiguous or at least without a consensus definition—sought to capture the fractured nature of our individual and collective identities. It is marked by what the French philosopher and sociologist Jean-François Lyotard (d. 1998) famously summarized as a general “incredulity towards metanarratives.”¹⁹⁵ While perhaps useful as a delimiter of epochal time, the term “postmodern” has come under scrutiny by various thinkers for its inherent ambiguity. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (d. 2017) proposed another descriptor for the context of now.¹⁹⁶ He called it “liquid modernity.”

Drawing on the standard states of matter as classically defined by natural science, Bauman noted that the modern era (marked by the so-called turn to the subject, celebrating the triumph of reason and science, and narrating a *telos* of human progress) was best likened to a solid. Solids are stable, static, unchanging, hold their shape under stress, are immobile, and permanent. By contrast, the age in which we find ourselves is less “post-modern,” Bauman contends, because we are in many ways still living in the shadow of modernity and exist within the reality that was understood to be more solid or frozen. What we experience now is the melting of that stalwart modernity. As Bauman explains, “‘fluidity’ or ‘liquidity’ [are] fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways *novel*, phase in the history of modernity.”¹⁹⁷ Bauman contends that early modernity is best understood as that time and effort in which earlier melting of standard metanarratives and cultural presuppositions were accomplished in order to make room for replacements that were intended to be even more solid, integrative, and lasting. What distinguishes our time—that of *liquid* modernity—is that the “task

¹⁹⁵ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

¹⁹⁶ As with any public intellectual, the late Professor Bauman is not without his critics, both intellectual and personal. Regarding the latter, it is worth noting that some have taken issue with Bauman’s admission of participating as a bureaucrat in the Communist Government of Poland as a young man. While not wishing to make a personal judgment about the quality of Bauman’s character or political affiliations, I do want to acknowledge this rather public aspect of his early adult life. For more on his biography, see Vanessa Gera, “Zygmunt Bauman, Sociologist Who Wrote Identity in the Modern World, Dies at 91,” *Associated Press* (January 9, 2017), online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/zygmunt-bauman-sociologist-who-wrote-identity-in-the-modern-world-dies-at-91/2017/01/09/ba6f821e-d6b2-11e6-b8b2-cb5164beba6b_story.html?utm_term=.4317afe4a68d.

¹⁹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 2.

of constructing new and better order to replace the old and defective one is not presently on the agenda.” Bauman goes on to explain:

The “melting of solids,” the permanent feature of modernity, has therefore acquired a new meaning, and above all has been redirected to a new target—one of the paramount effects of that redirection being the dissolution of forces which could keep the question of order and system on the political agenda. The solids whose turn has come to be thrown into the melting pot and which are in the process of being melted at the present time, the time of fluid modernity, are the bonds which interlock individual choices in collective projects and actions—the patterns of communication and co-ordination between individually conducted life policies on the one hand and the political actions of human collectivities on the other.¹⁹⁸

The sense of our liquid times—that which bears the weight of history and time and space, but slips through our proverbial fingers when we attempt to grasp it firmly—is one felt by women and men around the world in various ways as a result of the increased globalization. The effects of globalization are not universally experienced singularly, for there are perceptible gaps between the economic, political, cultural, and ecclesial winners and losers. Nevertheless, the de-solidification of our contexts is, to some degree, a widespread phenomenon of our time.

So, what does this mean? Bauman suggests that, among other features, “These days patterns and configurations are no longer ‘given,’ let alone ‘self-evident’; there are just too many of them, clashing with one another and contradicting one another’s commandments, so that each one has been stripped of a good deal of compelling, coercively constraining powers.”¹⁹⁹ In some instances, the liquidity of our modern age is experienced in the form of that perennial ecclesial boogeyman known as relativism. Most often, it simply means that identities, cultures, meaning, value, and grounding are not presupposed or axiomatic. Whereas Karl Rahner (d. 1984) described early modernity as like a wintry season, we might argue with Bauman that our context is now more akin to a rainy season, or even a monsoon.” Meaning-making in liquid modernity

¹⁹⁸ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 6.

¹⁹⁹ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 7.

means always being in flux, not keeping shape for very long and subject to revision, especially in the wake of fast-paced technological, scientific discovery and near-instantaneous global communications.

If liquidity most readily describes the condition of our modern era and contemporary context, then I believe that the image of the abyss best describes the challenge before us theologically. The image of abyss is a deeply theological concept that finds its scriptural origin in Genesis 1:2 with the naming of the *tehom* over which the divine *Ruach Elohim* draws near at the outset of creation. Within that primordial context, there is chaos and uncertainty, disorder and confusion, lack of future and yet infinite potential. So too, our modern context—liquid as it may be—is distinguished by rapid change, chaos, uncertainty, the unknown, and yet it bears unknown potential. Theologian An Yountae (currently on the faculty at California State University, Northridge) reminds us that the image of the abyss is not merely raw chaos, but it “also becomes the womb of creative potential.”²⁰⁰ I believe the language of the abyss is both descriptive and diagnostic for the enterprise of doing theology today.

Descriptively, there is, in fact, a gap or abyss between the reality of the lived experiences of most women and men in the world—including those within the Franciscan family—and the way that theological reflection has proceeded without prejudice from the shift from early modernity to its current liquid state. In other words, because so much of theology is presented as if the solid foundations of modernity have not melted and metanarratives remain axiomatic, there is a real impasse between what rises as the truly pressing theological and pastoral concerns of our time and the way we often articulate the faith. To borrow an apt set of categories from the Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan (d. 1984), too much of the way theology is understood and passed down within the tradition is in the classicist mode and does not adequately take into account historical consciousness.²⁰¹ A classicist world-view is a black-and-white way of approaching reality, seeking timeless, simple, and static answers to complex questions that deserve a more robust and nuanced response. Historical-Mindedness, on the other hand, is a handy term to denote

²⁰⁰ An Yountae, *The Decolonial Abyss: Mysticism and Cosmopolitics from the Ruins* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 11.

²⁰¹ See Bernard Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness,” in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, eds. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 1-9.

recognition of the world's complexity, the need for nuance in scholarly inquiry, and an appreciation for fullness in the understanding of our faith, which we seek but which we may never attain. The latter aligns better with the state of liquid modernity in which we find ourselves today.

Diagnostically, the image of the abyss as creative womb, that space of being in-between, where the creative work of God's Spirit can take place, offers us a challenge and invitation. To overcome the abyss-as-impasse and do theology in an age of liquidity, we must shift our individual and collective focus from the status quo and repetition of an untenable classicist approach to God and the world toward, instead, other ways of knowing and interpreting ourselves, the rest of creation, and God. To this end, I suggest that what has been emerging in recent years as a "decolonial option" or "the decolonial turn" as a way of thinking about knowledge, interpretation, and practice offers us an important methodological starting point.²⁰²

There is not enough space here to do justice to the richness and development of decoloniality having risen to greater prominence as a deliberate hermeneutical approach in recent years.²⁰³ In brief, as theorists Catherine Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo explain, decoloniality "is not a new paradigm or mode of critical thought. It is a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis."²⁰⁴ One of the key dimensions of a hermeneutic of decoloniality is the critical interpretation of standards of knowing and experiencing, which have been conscripted by singular forces that align with the expansion of the Western European colonial enterprise. To get at this reality, we might ask: what constitutes *real* or *legitimate* knowledge, science, or scholarship? Put in a pastoral context, we could also inquire about what is considered a *real* or *legitimate* devotion, Christian practice, or saint to be venerated? Oftentimes, the gatekeepers to what is considered *real* or *legitimate* are the same in both cases: those who maintain and deploy this colonial power, in broader society and in

²⁰² An, *Decolonial Abyss*, 20.

²⁰³ For more on this, see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); and Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification," in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, eds. Mabel Moraña and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 181-224.

²⁰⁴ Catherine E. Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 5.

the church (that the history of colonization is a simultaneous and overlapping history of these two realities is not coincidental here).

Those who pursue a decolonial turn or embrace a decolonial option seek “conceptual instruments, other ways of theorizing, and other genealogies” in an effort to broaden what has typically been limited in terms of the “real” or “legitimate.”²⁰⁵ Such a shift in prioritization of knowing and interpretation moves from the centers of power to the colonial peripheries, which is a move that is deeply Franciscan at its core, particularly when one considers the intentional location of *minoritas* as our grounding principle.²⁰⁶ It is a call for us to consider and privilege voices, experiences, and ways of knowing that are often overlooked and ignored. It demands humility on the part of those who have found themselves the gatekeepers of orthodoxy, tradition, and legitimacy. It recognizes that God’s Spirit is at work wherever God pleases and not just where those who have held power and authority say God is at work.

So, given that the context of now is liquid modernity, that we face an abyss, and that the constructive potential that exists in this moment includes a call to embrace the decolonial turn, I wish to highlight two theological areas we as Franciscans need to pay special attention to and engage in creative and constructive ways. The first is what I am calling a “theology of authenticity” and the second is “the meaning of the human person.” In what follows, I wish to merely propose these theological topics as a point of departure for our discussion and ongoing theological formation, which is both shaped by and ought to inform our pastoral praxis and community life in the *forma vitae* of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

Two Theological Loci: Authenticity and Personhood

The first theological topic I wish to draw our attention to is something that has been a focal point of young adults from around the world as they articulated the pressing issues that face them ahead of the 2018

²⁰⁵ Walsh and Mignolo, *On Decoloniality*, 7.

²⁰⁶ Alternatively, Ramón Grosfoguel refers to this as epistemological location as “border thinking.” See, for example, his essay “World-Systems Analysis in the Context of Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality,” *Review* 29 (2006): 167–187.

Synod of Bishops on Young People.²⁰⁷ One of the most repeated themes that surfaced was the desire young adults had for what they named as an “authentic church,” marked by leaders who could admit mistakes, seek forgiveness, and accompany their younger sisters and brothers in their respective faith journeys with Christ. They address those in hierarchical leadership by name and exhort these leaders to be “transparent, welcoming, honest, inviting, communicative, accessible, joyful and interactive.”²⁰⁸ To this end, the challenge that arises is an invitation for us to reflect on our own theology of leadership, holiness, and sin in the church—something all the more pressing in the wake of the recently revealed history of sexual abuse cover-up witnessed to in the 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report.²⁰⁹

What young people seem to be naming is the fact that we as a faith community, especially those of us in ecclesiastical leadership roles as men religious, are not working adequately enough to present the life of the Gospel authentically. We have too easily forgotten that one of the earliest and central Christian ecclesial claims is that the church is holy, and yet, as described in *Lumen gentium*, it is “at once holy and always in need of purification.”²¹⁰ The sinfulness of the church is seen in both the personal sins of its members, including its leaders, as well as collectively in the church’s historical complicity in various structural evils over the centuries.

This is where I believe the work of the Franciscan theological tradition is so important. Deeply human, rooted in an incarnational understanding of God’s humility and desire for creation, we celebrate the goodness of our created world and our human family, while at the same time we recognize the deeply fallen state of our affairs. The Franciscan tradition started as a medieval lay *penitential* movement after all! For this reason,

²⁰⁷ For a fuller account and analysis of what will only be briefly explored here, see Daniel P. Horan, “Authenticity, Vocation, and the Risk of Faith: Hopes and Challenges for the 2018 Synod on Young People,” unpublished keynote addresses (September 2018), <https://youtu.be/AGKfUd-k8OeU> (Part I) and <https://youtu.be/m75GVVYejxY> (Part II).

²⁰⁸ See “Final Document from the Pre-Synodal Meeting” (March 2018), no. 11, <http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.html>.

²⁰⁹ See Office of the Attorney General, “Pennsylvania Diocese Victims Report” (July 27, 2018). Available online at: <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/report/>. For a constructively critical engagement with the primary source material and report, see Peter Steinfelds, “The PA Grand-Jury Report: Not What it Seems,” *Commonweal* (March 21, 2019), <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/pa-grand-jury-report-not-what-it-seems>.

²¹⁰ LG 8.

we have never been willfully ignorant of the reality of our simultaneous sinfulness and justification in Christ. Other religious traditions within the Catholic Church are far less comfortable with this tension. Furthermore, this tension is heightened in our context by a cultural fear of litigation and the obsessive need to be right or to win at all costs.

Rather than start our theological narratives with a presumption of ecclesial purity and perfection, perhaps we would do well to heed the wisdom of St. Francis in his *Admonitions* or look to the lesser-known and, at times, uncomfortable stories of our founder that center on his making mistakes, offending or sinning, and yet never shying away from the need to admit his wrongdoing, seek reconciliation, and offer penance. Rather than contribute to a misperception of moral weakness or ambiguity, such public practices convey to young adults and all people a more honest face of ecclesial leadership and pastoral ministry. We are not perfect. The Church, which is composed of all the baptized, the members of the Body of Christ, is *not perfect*. Why should we pretend to be otherwise?

Fear of further instability of mission and identity in the age of liquid modernity leads many church leaders and theologians to grasp onto the melting ice floes of a classicist worldview. But this attitude and practice only contributes to a deepening abyss between reality and falsity, between the church as some wish it were and the church as it really is. Embracing a decolonial option means that our starting point, as those in a privileged location of leadership and ministry, ought to be one of humility that allows us to hear the experiences and realities of the women and men—such as the young adults from around the globe—and follow their lead, learn from their wisdom, and empower their action. While it is true that some young adults occupy social locations that would not be considered marginal, such as many of those in Euro-American contexts, nevertheless the whole demographic of young adults is traditionally subjugated by an older, clerical population of ecclesiastical leaders. Furthermore, those parts of the world where young-adult Catholics are found tend to be in locations variously identified as the “two-thirds world,” which locates such a population in a double-bind of peripherality.

The second theological topic I wish to name is that of personhood or, more directly, what does it mean to be human? The received tradition of theological anthropology rooted in an Aristotelian–Thomistic frame is breaking under the weight of historical, social, natural, psychological

sciences, philosophy, and theology that have provided important and unassailable insights about what it means to be human over the last eight centuries. Furthermore, the lived experiences of women and men in various cultures and contexts at best do not confirm, and more often contradict the proposals that have grounded so much of the way our magisterial teaching and theological reflection on humanity and morality have been articulated. I think we have to take seriously our received tradition but not merely repeat it with a kind of fideism. Instead, we must have the epistemological, theological, and pastoral humility to receive input from the world around us that challenges the accuracy of our claims.

It is not accurate to cast the experience of sexual and gender diversity as postmodern ideologies bent on ushering in a radical relativism. It is not accurate to cast the differing experiences of embodiment and social location marked by race, class, ability, national status, and other characteristics as irrelevant to our understanding of Christian anthropology. It is not accurate to suggest that the reality of transgender persons is untrue or that gay and lesbian persons are merely electing to make a counter-cultural choice about sexual attraction. As the saying goes, just because something is new to you does not make it objectively novel. The compression of time and space in an age of globalization and liquid modernity has made access to and created platforms for the dissemination of diverse human experiences that must be taken seriously and without prejudgment if we wish to assert authentically our belief in the inherent and unalienable dignity and value of each and every human person.

One of the pressing theological challenges for Franciscans in the twenty-first century is to engage these realities with a Christian theological response that is grounded in the tradition but is also applicable in light of the diversity of experiences, identities, and locations of the widely diverse members of the human family. The good news for us is that I believe there are an abundance of pastoral and theological resources that form what I often call the “minority opinion” within the theological history of the last millennium. While Leo XIII (d. 1903) effectively elevated Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) as theologian par excellence to the near exclusion of other thinkers,²¹¹ he did not eradicate their thought and writings. Bonaventure (d. 1274), Peter John Olivi (d. 1298), Duns

²¹¹ See Leo XIII, *Aeterni patris*, “On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy” (4 August 1879), http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html.

Scotus (d. 1308), Angela of Foligno (d. 1309), William of Ockham (d. 1347), and so many other luminaries have been under-resourced and offer perfectly orthodox yet alternative approaches to many of our most pressing concerns.²¹²

Embracing a decolonial option prioritizes not only the often subjugated experiences and ways of knowing that belong to marginalized women and men, but it also prioritizes our historical hermeneutics, our way of interpreting and seeing. It challenges us to go back and look at what Scotus says differently than Thomas, what other figures say in a manner that has not been adequately heard to date. Embracing a decolonial option means starting not with a sense that we already have the answers, but that we have yet to hear the experiences and insights of a significant portion of our human family. Indeed, if Anselm (d. 1109) was right about the enterprise of theology, then we must be in the business of *seeking greater understanding* of the faith we profess—this is an ongoing responsibility.

As Franciscans concerned with lifelong theological formation, committed as we are to meet women and men where they are in the spirit of our itinerant tradition, we must be advocates, personally and collectively, for starting with the voices and experiences of those previously ignored or overlooked. We must ask ourselves: *whose experience counts* as the starting point for our theological reflection? Furthermore, we must be open to renewing our sense of theological anthropology that is true to our Christian faith, but is also capacious enough to hold the experiences of LGBTQ persons, women of color, the poor and outcast, and all others as much as it has for the Euro-American, white, male cleric.

Conclusion

In summary, what I have been advocating here is a concerted shift in the way we approach theological questions and respond to the experiences and circumstances of the women and men of our time. Having recognized the state of our context as liquid and the abyss that stands between where we are and from where theology has too often come, we are challenged with the need for a renewed sense of authenticity and personhood. This raises a number of critical questions and leaves us with more

²¹² This is something addressed explicitly in my forthcoming book, *Catholicity and Emerging Personhood: A Contemporary Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2019).

queries than answers. I want to draw our attention to a few of these. Among the questions I wish to leave us to ponder and discuss are these:

- With whom or with what do we begin our theologies?
- Whose voices are heard, whose experiences count?
- What does it mean to say that we are at once holy and sinful?
- What does authenticity look like in the church? How do we understand the human person?
- What role (if any) does the abundant diversity of the human experience play in our theological anthropology?
- How might we lead the way in modeling—within the church and beyond—a mode of studying and doing theology such that our pastoral practice is grounded in a coherent, sensible, and relevant understanding of the human person?

A Brotherhood of Missionary Disciples

John Corriveau OFM Cap

Prior to St. Francis, religious life in the Church was modelled on the early Christian community described in the Book of Acts:

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2:44-47)

Consecrated life established on this model continues to radiate the living presence of God in our world.

However, Francis consciously chose another model for his brotherhood, namely, a discipleship model. St. Francis chose to model his order on the life of Christ and his disciples: “After the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live after the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”²¹³

This assumes critical importance as we consider our Franciscan call to mission in the Church today. In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis extends this vision of discipleship to the entire Church, challenging us to be a missionary Church, a community of Missionary Disciples. I wish to consider the contribution which our Franciscan tradition brings to this challenge of forming the Church as a community of Missionary Disciples.

²¹³ Test 14 = FA:ED 1:125.

The Embrace of Franciscan Brotherhood Is First and Foremost the Embrace of Jesus Christ

Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for he created and formed you *to the image* of his beloved Son according to the body and to *His likeness* according to the Spirit.²¹⁴

Bonaventure helps us to understand the perspective of Francis: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1). Reflecting on these opening words of John’s Gospel, Bonaventure teaches that the Word is the expressed “Image” of the Father: the total self-giving love of the Father is imaged in the Son. Reflecting on the next passage of John: “All things came into being through [the Word], and without [the Word] not one thing came into being” (Jn 1:3), Bonaventure states that the Word is the “exemplar”—the template or model—for all of creation. Furthermore, within creation, the human person is created to be an expressed image of the Word.²¹⁵ Therefore, Bonaventure speaks of the human person as the “little word” of the Father. Jesus is the “Definitive Word” of the Father in the flesh—we are “little words of the Father” in the flesh. When this “little word” is spoken with clarity in and through our lives, God is made visible in the world.²¹⁶

St. Francis modelled this reality in an incredible manner. For Francis, imitation of Jesus was doing what Jesus did. Imitation of Jesus was living as Jesus lived, thinking as Jesus thought. It was all this and incredibly more! Francis sought to reproduce in his life the same relationship which Jesus lived with the Father! Imitation of Jesus was an invitation to enter into Trinitarian Relationship. Francis sought to be the “little word” modelled perfectly on the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. This is the profound significance of the third defining moment in the conversion experience of Francis: “From now on I will say freely, ‘Our Father who art in heaven,’ and not ‘My Father Pietro di Bernardone.’”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Adm V.1 = FA:ED I:131.

²¹⁵ As cited in Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought and Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2001), 72.

²¹⁶ As cited in Ilia Delio, *The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 61.

²¹⁷ 2C I:1 = FA:ED II:251.

In imitation of Jesus, Francis seeks to give himself totally to his relationship with the Father. Jesus takes him by the hand and shows him the way. At his baptism by John, Jesus enters the Jordan River as the carpenter from Nazareth. This is a profound conversion experience in which the Father touches the passionate heart of Jesus, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mk 1: 11). Jesus is moved to the depth of his being and emerges from the Jordan as the living gospel of God. Jesus leads Francis along the same path of conversion! A short time after the event before the Bishop of Assisi, Francis hears the voice of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew sending his disciples two by two to preach the good news of penance and peace (cf. Mt 10). He is moved to the depth of his being. Just as the Father touched the passionate heart of Jesus at his Baptism, so Jesus, through his Word, touches the passionate heart of Francis: “This is what I want, for this I yearn, this is what I desire to do with all my heart!”²¹⁸

In Francis we see the true meaning of conversion, which is defined, not by what we leave behind, but by what we embrace! The conversion of Francis was his embrace of Jesus Christ. The consequence of his conversion was the abandonment of his life as the playboy of Assisi. In Francis we also see that conversion is not a once-and-for-all affair! His conversion continued throughout life. At the end of his life he exhorts himself and all of us: “Let us begin... and make progress, because up to now we have made too little progress.”²¹⁹

Pope Francis reminds us that “mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people” (EG 268). If our Franciscan brotherhood is to be a force of mission and evangelization in our world, each of us must continually renew our passion for Jesus and his people.

In Luke 6:12-49, Jesus shows us the way. Jesus has just spent the night in prayer with his disciples on the mountain. At daybreak, he calls the disciples to him and appoints the Twelve. Jesus, then, leads them down the mountain and arrives at the plain where he encounters a multitude of people (cf. Lk 6:17). The scene is dramatic. The apostles and disciples, gathered around and behind him on the slope, witness his powerful presence among the people, whom Luke tells us, have come “to hear him and be healed of their diseases; ... all in the crowd were trying to touch him,

²¹⁸ 1C, First Book, IX:22 = FA:ED I:201-202.

²¹⁹ Julian of Speyer, *The Life of Saint Francis*, XII = FA:ED I:414.

for power came out from him and healed all of them” (6:18-19). Luke continues: “Then, he looked up at his disciples and said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor ...’” (6:20). In Luke, the beatitudes are addressed primarily to the apostles and disciples for the world. The beatitudes—poverty, humility—are not simply ascetical virtues meant to perfect us; rather, they are meant to forge bonds of communion and love to transform the world! Jesus challenges his disciples to share the saving, transforming power which they can visibly see him exercising among the people by configuring their lives according to the beatitudes of the Kingdom. But there is more!

Again, in Luke, specifically addressing the disciples, Jesus tells them a parable:

Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above the teacher... Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? (6:39-41).

Can a blind person act as a guide to a blind person? Just as the preaching of the beatitudes takes new meaning by referring back to Jesus’s electric relationship with the crowds, so this passage takes meaning from the introduction of the Kingdom event: “He went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God” (6:12). Only a return to the mountain, to contemplation, can open the eyes of our hearts, allow our passion to be re-ignited, for Jesus and the transforming power of the beatitudes. Only contemplation of the face of God can transform the beatitudes from social theory to faith practice. We see this in Francis’s embrace of evangelical poverty. Standing before the Bishop of Assisi, contemplating the face of God, Francis strips himself not only of the clothing provided by Pietro di Bernardone, but the security his wealth promised, and entrusts his security to God alone. Contemplation of the face of God transforms the beatitudes from social theory into faith practice.

“A disciple is not above the teacher ...” (Lk 6:40). It is important to ask: “Who is our teacher?” Through whose eyes do we look upon the poor? Through whose eyes do we look upon the consumerism and greed of our world? Is it the daily newspaper or nightly television news? A journal of sociology or even of theology? Or, do we listen to the Word of God in

daily prayer? “A disciple is not above the teacher!” If the daily newspaper or sociological journal or even a theological text is our only teacher, we are unable to lead our people beyond our teacher! The person of Jesus, the Word of God, purifies us and continually reveals to us our true identity, the identity of the poor, and the true identity of our world.

“Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?” (Lk 6:41). We are painfully aware how the toleration of sexual misconduct on the part of the clergy has blighted the Church’s proclamation of the gospel. Our newspapers make us aware of that! However, do we realize how our newspapers and televisions immunize us to the violence, greed, and dominating power that so oppress our world and whose roots exist in every human heart, including our own? Only a return with Jesus to the mountain, only the contemplation of the holiness and compassion of God can help us to recognize the dimensions of our immersion into the corporate sinfulness of our world and even the corporate sinfulness of our Church, which impedes us in extending the healing touch of Jesus in our world. Prayer and contemplation must transform us from ecclesiastical functionaries into apostles/disciples/ministers of the mysteries of God:

Prayer to God, as the breathing of love, has its origins from a movement of the Holy Spirit through which an interior person listens to the voice of God speaking to the heart. For (it is) God who has loved us first.²²⁰

For Francis, Clare, and Bonaventure, contemplation is seeing with the eyes of the heart! Prayer and contemplation must constantly ignite and re-ignite in our hearts the passion expressed by Bonaventure as he describes the Journey of the Soul into God:

But if you wish to know how these things come about,
 Ask grace not instruction,
 Desire not understanding,
 The groaning of prayer not diligent reading,
 The Spouse not the teacher,
 God not man,
 Darkness not clarity;

²²⁰ *The Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor* 45:1, <https://www.ofmcap.org/en/notizie/altre-notizie/item/1074-constitutions-of-the-order-in-7-languages>.

Not light but the fire
 That totally inflames and carries us into God ...
 This fire is God,
 And his furnace is in Jerusalem;
 And Christ enkindles it
 In the heat of his burning passion.²²¹

Joy of the Gospel

In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis has a number of statements that merit our reflection:

1. “The spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelization.”
2. “Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: ‘I saw you under the fig tree’” (Jn 1:48).
3. “A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him.”
4. “Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people.”²²²

Thus, we pose the question: In the animation of our fraternities and in promoting our mission, we often *presume* the personal commitment of each brother to Jesus Christ. How can we re-awaken in our brothers the passion for Christ that we see in Francis: “This is what I want, for this I yearn, this is what I desire to do with all my heart!”²²³ “Let us begin... and make progress, because up to now we have made too little progress.”²²⁴

²²¹ *Soul's Journey into God*, 7.6, trans. Cousins , 115.

²²² EG 78, 264, 266, and 268 respectively.

²²³ See note 217 above.

²²⁴ See note 218 above.

For Francis, the Embrace of Jesus Leads Directly to Brotherhood

“After the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live after the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”²²⁵

Francis chose humility, minority, as the defining characteristic of his brotherhood. Bonaventure gives the theological foundation of this choice. Bonaventure tells us: the turning of the Father toward the Son in total self-giving love is the Father’s humility.²²⁶ Therefore, in his “Praises of God,” when Francis addresses God, he does not use the adjective “humble” but the noun “humility.”²²⁷ Humility is not a quality of God. Humility is the essence of God as love.²²⁸ Humility defines the TO BE of the Father—the very essence of the Father—eternally turned toward the Son in Self-Giving Love. The option for relationship defines the humility of God. God is communion of Father, Son, and Spirit made one in total, self-giving love. We are accustomed to speak of one God in three persons; it is more precise and correct to speak of three persons who are one God. When we speak of one God in three persons, it is possible to think of God as a static reality. When we speak of three persons who are one God, the unity of God is ecstatic and dynamic. Bonaventure situates the mystery of Church communion within the dynamism of this mystery of Trinitarian Relationship. He speaks of the “Eternal Word” in the bosom of the Father—the “Incarnate Word” enfleshed in Jesus Christ—and the “Inspired Word” enfleshed in the communion of the Church.²²⁹ Just as there is only one Word, so there is one communion. There are not two sets of communion—one among Divine Persons and the other among human persons with the latter called to replicate or imitate the former. There is one mystery of communion which includes God and humanity as beloved partners in *perichoresis*, *circumincessio*, “the dance of life.”²³⁰ We are taken up into Trinitarian relationship, Trinitarian communion. This understanding of the communion of the Church is echoed in Preface VIII for Sundays in Ordinary Times:

²²⁵ Test 14 = FA:ED I:125.

²²⁶ Delio, *Humility of God*, 42.

²²⁷ “The Praises of God.” FA:ED I:109, line 4.

²²⁸ Delio, *Humility of God*, 42.

²²⁹ Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 87.

²³⁰ Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 41.

For when your children were scattered afar by sin,
 through the Blood of your Son and the power of the Spirit,
 you gathered them again to yourself,
 that a people, formed as one by the unity of the Trinity,
 made the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit,
 might ... be manifest as the Church.²³¹

In this Trinitarian understanding of communion, our order finds the dynamism and meaning of the witness of fraternal living. The Conventual Constitutions speak of fraternity as “icon of the Trinity”²³² and the Capuchin Constitutions speak of fraternity as “a human space inhabited by the Trinity”:

The Church, born from the side of Christ as a sacrament of unity, is essentially a mystery of communion, whose richness and depth are reflected in fraternal living, a human space inhabited by the Trinity.²³³

There are three characteristics of the early Franciscan fraternity which strongly impact our mission in the Church. First, the early Franciscan fraternity was based the personal relationship of each brother with Jesus Christ and, through Christ, with each of his brothers in fraternity. Fraternity is not the embrace of structure. Rather, it is the embrace of each of our brothers. It is profoundly relational.

Second, Franciscan fraternity is to be the Inspired Word. Franciscan fraternity is not simply a group of brothers called together to serve the Church. Francis formed his brotherhood TO BE Church. The fraternal gospel life, inspired by Francis, is a whirlpool drawing all who encounter it, all who witness and experience it, into a lived experience of Trinitarian Love: “a human space inhabited by the Trinity.”²³⁴

Third, these two basic characteristics of the early Franciscan Order were strongly influenced by the fact that Francis chose an itinerant model of life. Itineracy in the Franciscan tradition is more than wandering! In an

²³¹ *The Roman Missal*, English translation according to the Third Typica Edition (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), 286.

²³² *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual*, no. 62.

²³³ *The Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor*, no. 83.3, <https://www.ofmcap.org/en/notizie/altra-notizie/item/1074-constitutions-of-the-order-in-7-languages>.

²³⁴ *Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor*, no. 83.3.

itinerant model, fraternal life takes new forms not only place to place, but also with each group of brothers. Our discipleship model has been institutionalized, yet the itinerant origins of our charism continue to have important implications today and must continue to infuse our fraternal vision and our fraternal service. All communal forms of religious life are functionally relational. However, generally speaking, in the “Acts Model” of religious life discussed above, structure gives rise to, determines, and gives form and stability to fraternal relationships. In the discipleship model established by Francis, relationships give rise to structure and structure exists to sustain relationships: Franciscan communion does not flow from structure, rather, structure flows from Franciscan communion. This is very clearly expressed in the Conventual Constitutions when speaking about the Conventual chapter as “the privileged instrument of communion” which must “establish a suitable schedule for communal exercises which take into account the daily life according to the spirit of the fraternity and of each of the friars.”²³⁵ Fraternal relationships are the glue which holds all structures together: “As brothers given to each other by the Lord ... we should accept one another gratefully.”²³⁶ Friars don’t fit the structures; rather structures are molded to fit the friars, express their unity, and release the creativity of each.

From these observations, I wish to develop four consequences that touch our mission in the United States today:

First, **we are an Order of brothers.** The brotherhood we share is profoundly relational. Whenever Francis refers to himself, he always refers to himself as “I, *brother* Francis.” Leo was an ordained minister, but he was “*brother* Leo.” Furthermore, in both cases it is “brother” with a small case “b,” not a capital “B” because the title is relational not occupational! Francis was enthralled by the fact that, in his Incarnation, Jesus became his brother. Francis became acutely aware that just as Jesus became Francis’s brother in the incarnation, Jesus also became brother to every man, woman and child and forged a fraternal relationship with all of creation. Francis’s relationship with Jesus caused him to become brother to every man, woman, child and even every living creature on the earth. This is more than cute; it is revolutionary and fundamental to our charism. The three branches of the First Order have been united in recent times in pe-

²³⁵ *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual*, no. 63.

²³⁶ *Constitutions of the Capuchins Friars Minor*, no. 89.1.

tioning the Church to recognize the unique nature of our brotherhood and to dispense our Order from the requirement that only clerics can assume the ministry of leadership in our Order. This is important for the unity of our brotherhood. It is also an important witness to the Church that a Franciscan cleric can be subject to a lay member of the Church without impeding but rather enhancing his priestly ministry.

However, there is another equally important ecclesial dimension. A Franciscan who identifies himself as brother as Francis identified himself as brother will minister to his neighbour in an entirely different way. There can be no hint of domination in an authentic fraternal relationship! This is a strong witness and antidote to clericalism in our Order and in our Church. Pope Francis reminds us that priesthood has authority; however, “its key and axis is not power understood as domination, but the power to administer the sacrament of the Eucharist.”²³⁷ Franciscan fraternal relationships, lived joyfully, should become a force to redefine priestly relationships which are “totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members.”²³⁸ Aside from how we may be addressed by our people, a friar priest or a friar bishop who identifies himself as “brother” will exercise his ministry in a different manner.

Evangelii gaudium

1. “Some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross ... True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others.”

2. “God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us.”²³⁹

Question: “A friar priest ... or a friar bishop ... who identifies himself as ‘brother’ will exercise his ministry in a different manner.” Do you see this as an antidote to clericalism in our Order and the Church? Can we provide concrete examples?

²³⁷ EG 104.

²³⁸ EG 104.

²³⁹ EG 88 and 179.

Second, **Francis formed his brotherhood TO BE Church.** Franciscan fraternity is not simply a group of brothers called together to serve the Church. Francis formed his brotherhood TO BE Church. Inspired by Francis, fraternal gospel life is a whirlpool drawing all who encounter it, all who witness it, into a lived experience of Trinitarian Love, “a human space inhabited by the Trinity.” We remember the incident in the life of Francis when he invited a young brother to accompany him to preach in Assisi. They walked through the town greeting all whom they met. When they returned to the Portiuncula, the young brother asked when they were going to preach. The response: “We already have!” Pope Francis reminds us, “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction.’”²⁴⁰ This assumes even greater importance in the Church in the United States today. The credibility of Church teaching is severely conditioned by decisions to protect institutional structures at the price of care for the vulnerable.

The itinerant nature of the early brotherhood also influences this witness of fraternal life. Just as fraternal life took new forms place to place and with each new group of brothers, so their gospel witness also spoke to the particular challenges of each new group of people they met: think of the Wolf of Gubbio.²⁴¹ It was not a “one-size-fits-all-Christianity,” rather the witness and proclamation of gospel life was applied to each person and each community they encountered. They brought an encounter with Jesus Christ and not an ecclesiastical structure.

Evangelii gaudium:

1. “The spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelization.”
2. “Salvation ... is for everyone. God ... has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals.”

²⁴⁰ EG 15.

²⁴¹ LFl, chapter 21 = FA:ED III:603.

3. “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.”

4. “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction.’”

5. “The human person is always situated in a culture ... Grace supposes culture, and God’s gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it.”²⁴²

Question: How can we call our local fraternities to avoid “one-size-fits-all-Christianity” and to foster an outreach of witness and service which creates space “where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the gospel?”²⁴³

Third, this is **an Order Obedient to, but separate from, the Hierarchical Authority of the Church**. The early Franciscan brotherhood and its mission was carried out in communion with and in total obedience to the hierarchical authority of the Church. When Francis had only a dozen followers, he went to Rome to ask Honorius III to approve their way of gospel life and witness. However, the brotherhood never formed part of the hierarchical structure of the Church! Even when the Order became institutionalized, it remained obedient to the hierarchical structure of the Church but outside of it. The friary and the friary chapel were integral to the faith life of the local communities, but they did not participate in hierarchical authority. This gave the brothers a unique relationship with the faithful among whom they were recognized as brothers of the people. I am certain that this was not unique to the Capuchin branch of the Order but was shared by our entire Franciscan family. This relationship with both the faithful and the hierarchy provided a privileged platform to announce the gospel of Christ.

Speaking about the Capuchin branch, and I presume it is true of other branches of the Franciscan family, this changed in the mid-1800’s when we became a missionary Order. We became immersed in the hierarchical authority of the Church, taking responsibility not only for parishes but for entire Vicariates! We appointed not only pastors, but bishops!

²⁴² EG 78, 113, 114, 15, and 115.

²⁴³ EG 3.

Does not the present crisis in leadership in our Church summon us to repossess our tradition? Functioning outside but totally obedient to the hierarchical structures, could we not immerse ourselves in fraternal relationships with our people and lead them to renewed trust in the authority structures of our Church? We could do so with no conflict of interest.

Evangelii gaudium

1. “We speak more about law than about grace, more about the Church than about Christ, more about the Pope than about God’s word.”²⁴⁴

Question: How can we consciously re-possess our tradition of obedience to, but separation from the hierarchical authority of the Church?

Fourth, **The Holy Spirit is the General Minister of our Order.** St. Francis tells us that the Holy Spirit is the “General Minister of our Order.”²⁴⁵ In Trinitarian relationship, the Holy Spirit is the bond of unity between Father and Son. Raniero Cantalamessa (b. 1934), preacher to the papal household, often refers to the Holy Spirit as “The Divine Us.”²⁴⁶ It is not we who enter into relationship with the Holy Trinity, it is the Holy Spirit, the “General Minister,” who draws us into relationship, creating “a human space inhabited by the Trinity.” The Franciscan Order is a network of provinces. Each province is a network of local fraternities. Just as the unity of the Trinity is dynamic, happening here and now, so each fraternity must be the same living, dynamic reality. The unity of the fraternity is not a structural unity, happening in the moment I become assigned to that fraternity and accustom myself to the rhythm of this particular group of brothers. Like Trinitarian unity, Franciscan unity must be dynamic and ecstatic. Franciscan unity must generate an energy which embraces daily all the brothers, each in his own uniqueness and giftedness. This gospel energy must burst forth to embrace the world.

This defines authority in our brotherhood. The primary purpose of a minister’s authority is not “to get the job done.” Nor is it simply “to make

²⁴⁴ EG 38.

²⁴⁵ 2C, Second Book, CXLV:193 = FA:ED II:371.

²⁴⁶ E.g., his 2009 address at the 6th World Meeting of Families in Mexico City, online at <https://zenit.org/articles/father-cantalamessa-on-what-marriage-needs>. The idea is borrowed from German theologian Heribert Mühlen, *Der Heilige Geist als Person* (Münster: Aschendorfer Verlag, 1966).

the right decisions.” Rather, the minister must draw the brothers into communion and activate the gifts of each brother for the service of the fraternity and our gospel mission to the world.

The Holy Spirit, the General Minister of our Order, calls the local fraternity to be formed as the wise virgins of Matthew 25:1-13. As missionary disciples, we seek to touch and respond to the deepest desires of each person and of each society in the world around us, for this reveals the presence of God. Joined in local chapter, the brothers, like the wise virgins of Matthew 25, are constantly to scan the horizons of their society and, especially, the people among whom we are planted, seeking signs of the emerging presence of the Lord, seeking to touch God in each living person.

Evangelii gaudium:

1. “All of us are asked ... to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the gospel.”
2. “‘Mere administration’ can no longer be enough. Throughout the world let us be ‘permanently in a state of mission.’”
3. “Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary.”
4. “Christ’s resurrection is not an even of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world.”²⁴⁷

Questions: How can we as ministers move beyond mere administration to foster a brotherhood permanently in a state of mission? And how can the local chapter or conventual chapter truly become “the privileged instrument of communion”:²⁴⁸ discerning and uniting the gifts of each of the brothers in mission, and discerning the signs of the presence of the Lord in the people we serve?

²⁴⁷ EG 20, 25, 272, and 276.

²⁴⁸ *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual*, no. 63.

Conclusion

I wish to close by returning to Bonaventure's vision of Trinitarian relationship. God is communion of Father, Son and Spirit made one in total self-giving love. The Love-Who-Is-God, is not self-contained: the Father loving the Son, the Son loving the Father, the Father and Son One-in-the Spirit, forming a self-contained spiral of Eternal Love! Trinitarian-Unity-in-Love is ecstatic and dynamic, bursting outward and giving birth to creation and to history. In a similar manner, Franciscan fraternity, Icon of the Trinity, "a human space inhabited by the Trinity," is not self-contained. It must burst forth into the world in compassionate love.

The year 1517 is recognized by most Christians as one that inaugurated the Protestant Reformation and led to unparalleled divisions in Western Christianity. For Franciscans, 1517 was also a year of division. It was that year that Pope Leo X issued his papal bull *Itē Vos* that officially divided the “first order” Franciscans into Conventuals and Observants (the Capuchins were founded roughly a decade later).

In recent years, motivated by multiple factors, First Order Franciscans along with friars from other Franciscan families, have increasingly sought to collaborate in global initiatives and local ventures.

Catholic Theological Union in Chicago is one venue in which Franciscans in the United States have collaborated, especially around issues of ministerial training and formation. In 2017 and 2018 two distinctive events brought together representatives from various Franciscan families for shared study and reflection. These essays, collected from the presentations that punctuated those two convenings, are brought together in this volume as both testimony to and impetus for the ongoing collaboration of the followers of Francis and Clare, affirming their common charism and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ they are professed to live.

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